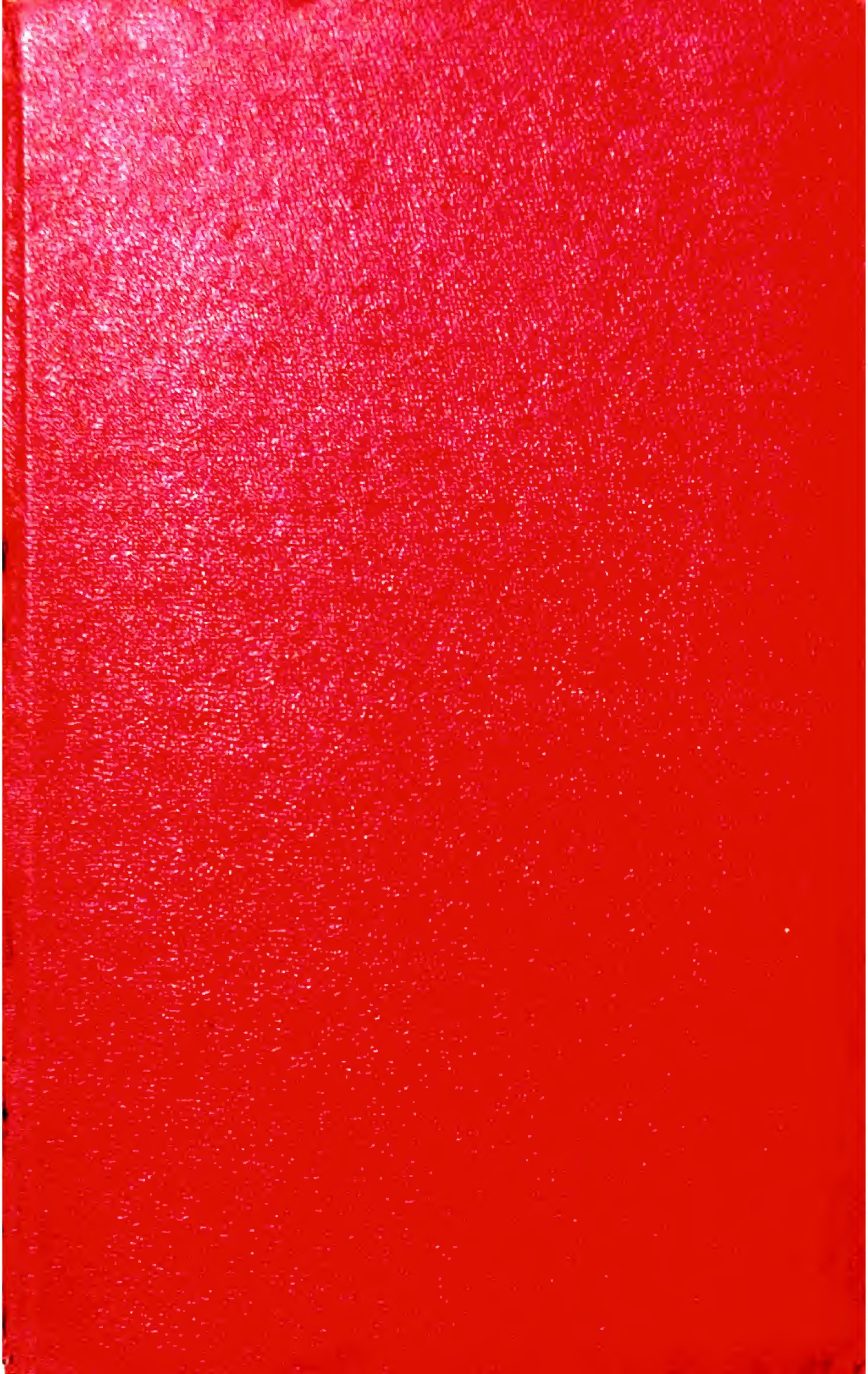

based on the well-known chronicle of Kalhana and its complements in Sanskrit and Persian. The original chronicle makes fascinating reading even now, eight hundred years after it was composed in Sanskrit verse, because it is not merely a record of revolts, invasions and battles but also presents events, anecdotes and experiences of basic human interest. In the present work the author has made use of the latter stuff and placed before the reading public a fairly large number of tales. In the words of Mr G. M. Sadiq, Chief Minister, Jammu and Kashmir, in his *Foreword* "The pith and marrow of the chronicle thus becomes accessible to the reader in a form that is lucid, crisp and enjoyable, eschewing all that is controversial or transient." Each tale has been selected for its own interest as a passing scene in the vast drama of life and stands by itself irrespective of its importance in its proper context in the chronicle. An event of deep human significance and dramatic intensity has been seized and allowed to reveal its development through the sharp mind of the historian.

The tales have a refreshing variety. Some of them have already passed into the imagination of the community in Kashmir in one form or another and are a part of the stream of consciousness there.

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M. Venkateswaran
New Delhi 23-7-1982

Tales from the Rajatarangini

Born in 1917 in Kashmir, Mr. S.L. Sadhu had his early education at the C. M. S. (Biscoe) School, Srinagar, which is well-known in upper India for its pioneering work in many fields. He took his degree from the Sri Pratap College, Srinagar, an institution founded in 1905 by the late Dr. Annie Besant. Later in 1938 he qualified for the degree of Master of Arts in English Literature at the University of Delhi, securing the first position on the merit list. After a spell of work as an active journalist Mr. Sadhu adopted teaching as his profession. He has been teaching English language and literature in his home state of Kashmir for the last twenty-five years. He was promoted to the Principals' cadre in 1963.

In 1962 Mr. Sadhu brought out his first book *Folk Tales From Kashmir*. The volume had a fairly good reception and some of the tales have since found their way into anthologies. The book was the recepient of an award from the J & K Academy of Art, Languages and Culture in 1964. *Birbal*, a historical play written by him in Kashmiri was awarded a first prize in the drama competition on the theme of "India's Quest for Unity" sponsored by the Ministry of Scientific Research and Cultural Affairs, Government of India. *Tales from the Rajatarangini* is in a sense a companion volume to his earlier book of folk tales.

M. Venkateswaran

TALES FROM THE RAJATARANGINI

by

S. L. Sadhu

With a Foreword by

Mr. G. M. Sadiq,

Chief Minister, Jammu & Kashmir

KAPOOR BROTHERS,

Booksellers & Publishers,

Lal Chowk, Srinagar, (Kashmir).

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1967

By the same author

- FOLK TALES FROM KASHMIR
- BIRBAL (KASHMIRI)

PRINTED IN INDIA
BY R. R. KAPOOR, AT INDOO PRINTING PRESS, SRINAGAR,
AND PUBLISHED BY KAPOOR BROTHERS,
SRINAGAR—1.

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Foreword

It is a matter of pleasure for me to write this foreword to the *Tales from the Rajatarangini*.

The *Rajatarangini* is a unique work amidst the literature of its kind. Originally composed in Sanskrit verse nearly eight hundred years ago, it chronicles the rise and fall of kings whose sway, with a few exceptions, did not go beyond the valley of Kashmir. Yet Kalhana's work fascinates readers far and wide. One of the reasons is that the work is not merely a record of revolts, invasions and battles which, at their best, make a sad commentary on our sublunary civilisation. but also presents events, anecdotes and experiences of basic human interest which form the foundation of literature. The present author has seized upon the latter and thus placed before the reading public a fairly large number of tales which are usually missed by the student with an eye trained for historical facts, dynasties of kings. dates and the like.

Kashmir has recently been the cause of a considerable output in books. Most of them take sides in a controversy. It is like discussing waves on the surface while the deep ocean remains unfathomed. The present work, I am glad to say, gives us a direct glimpse of the brooding depth and the complex subconscious of the people here.

Kalhana concluded his chronicle in 1149 A. D. But the present author has, for the purpose of this book, extended the *Rajatarangini* to the early nineteenth century to include works of the same name by Jonaraja, Srivara and Prajabhata, and *Twarikhi Kashmir* in Persian by Pir Hassan Shah Khoihami. The decision is correct and extends the range of the tales chronologically as well as qualitatively.

The *Rajatarangini* is voluminous and not many have the leisure or the facility to pore over its pages. The present author has, therefore, done well to spare the reader the effort needed to go through verse after verse in translation. The pith and marrow of the chronicle thus becomes accessible to the reader in a form that is lucid, crisp and enjoyable, eschewing all that is controversial or transient. The tales have a refreshing variety, ranging from the *paisacas* and *nagas* to saints, warriors and kings, and roll together folklore and legend, historical facts and witchcraft, human ingenuity and supra-human intercession. Such is the stuff that goes into the making of Kalhana's chronicle and the cultural mosaic of the people of the region reveals traces of these influences.

I regard the *Tales from the Rajatarangini* not only as an important addition to the literature on the subject but as a commendable work too. Judging from the welcome accorded to the author's earlier book *Folk Tales from Kashmir* it would, I believe, be read widely and, may I say, profitably. I hope the book stimulates its readers to further literary endeavour in different fields of allied interest.

Jammu

G. M. Sadiq
(Chief Minister)

Preface

The *Rajatarangini* has been referred to as 'the only history of its kind in India' and the 'last great work in Sanskrit literature.' It is a work that fascinates equally the antiquarian, the student of history and the explorer of literary beauty and poetic ornament. Sultan Zain-ul-abdin who ruled Kashmir in A. D. 1423—73 was so impressed by it that he not only got it translated into Persian but also created a department for the continuation of this chronicle in Sanskrit verse. This is a rare tribute in the history of our civilized progress and Kalhana is perhaps the only writer to claim it. In accordance with the Sultan's commands Jonaraja, Srivara and Prajabhata recorded in succession the events from A. D. 1149—50 when Kalhana completed the 7826th verse of the *Rajatarangini* to the time when, after annexing Kashmir, Akbar, the great Moghul, came here on his imperial visit and 'gladdened the hearts of Brahmin boys with gifts of gold.'

Kalhana's chronicle is, however, voluminous and not every one who desires to read it has the leisure or the facility to accomplish the task. Those who undertake it are confronted with accounts of intrigues, treacheries, murders and battles that make no edifying reading. The dust and din raised by the march of troops and the clash of arms as recorded in the chronicle subsided long ago and the reader can withdraw his mind from this desplay of animality to feed on much else that is fortunately salted to last for ever. An attempt has been made in the following pages to present some of this stuff, keeping in view the interests of the average reader.

The present work is based mainly on the *Rajatarangini* of

Kalhana, alongwith its complements which bring the account down to 1587 A. D, and the *Twarikhi Kashmir* by Pir Hassan Shah published by the Research and Publications Department of the Jammu and Kashmir Government. The title at first proposed for the book was "Historical Tales from Kashmir" which would perhaps not go ill with an earlier work of the writer, *Folk Tales from Kashmir* (Asia). But that title appears slightly inappropriate; for, apart from the fact that Kalhana has recorded them, some of the anecdotes and events, especially those pertaining to earlier ages in which the borderline between the actual and the mythical has disappeared, do not fully satisfy the requirements of a sceptical age. Hence the title *Tales from the Rajatarangini*.

Three or four chapters of this book deal chiefly with major political revolutions which have had far-reaching influence on the valley and India as a whole The replacement of the Hindu dynasty of rulers by the line of Sultans through a bloodless revolution is as phenomenal an occurrence as ever in history. The dynasty founded by Shahmir petered out and the sultanate of Kashmir succombed to the Mughal invasion in 1587. The Mughals themselves lost ground to the trans-Khyber Afghans who were in turn ousted by the Sikhs. In all these cases, as in others, the downfall of the ruling dynasty was heralded by misgovernment and completed by internal dissensions. Kashmir is a state on the most important strategic border of India and the lessons of these chapters should not be lost on any reader either within the state or outside.

The present work is, however, not meant to be a contribution to the study of history. Its interest is different. Besides being a chronicle of great celebrity the *Rajatarangini* is a composition in poetry. Kalhana regarded himself more as a poet than a historian, and his work as *kavya*, an exercise in poetic composition. Says he, "Worthy of praise is that power of true poets, whatever it may be, which surpasses even the stream of nectar, in as much as by it their own bodies of glory

as well as those of others obtain immortality." Again, "We pay reverence to that naturally sublime craft of poets without whose favour even mighty kings are not remembered .. ... Without thee, O brother composer of true poetry—without thee the universe is blind ..." History survives in our minds through poetry and the tales herein set down add spice to the narrative of monarchs.

The basic motives and urges for human action are always interesting, especially when the web of action spreads beyond the individual and gives rise to reactions and complications. The deeds related in the following pages are based on common human urges and motives, ambition, greed and lust, love, affection and faith, revenge and rivalry, tenderness and humility, the ingenuity of a king, the wit of a statesman, the devotion of a wife or the loyalty of a servant. With the instinct of an artist Kalhana has adorned the pages of his chronicle with tales and anecdotes; and even though the institution of kingship has virtually passed into oblivion, the tales, like those of the prudence of Durlabhavardana, the sacrifice of Mitrasarma for Jayapida or the flood control measures of Suyya remain. Some of the tales, as of Bombur and Lolre, Shri Bhat and Zain-ul-abdin, and Habba Khatun have already passed into the imagination of the community and are a part of the stream of our consciousness.

Projecting the customs and traditions in the valley from the days of *Nagas* and *Paisacas*, these tales enable the reader to catch a glimpse of the rich tangle of life in Kashmir. Witchcraft and prayer, cults of animal sacrifice and non-violence, Brahmin *parisads*, Damaras and Tantrins, use and abuse of the weapon of hunger-strike, and plaints for justice in several baffling cases expose the skeins of our belief and culture. Each tale has, however, been selected for its own interest as a passing scene in the vast drama of life and stands by itself irrespective of its importance in its proper context in the chronicle. In almost every tale an event of deep human significance and dramatic intensity has been seized and allowed to reveal its

development through the sharp mind of the poet-historian. Presented thus the tales are not very far from imaginative literature and it is hoped that the reader finds them of more than passing interest.

It is my pleasant duty to acknowledge my indebtedness to the translations of the *Rajatarangini* into English made severally by J. C Dutt (1879—87), Auriel Stein (1900) and R. S. Pandit (1936). Throughout these pages the three sources have been drawn upon for quotations and otherwise without reservation and acknowledgement. *Twarikhi Kashmir* by Pir Hassan Shah is a reference book invaluable for all those interested in Kashmir. It has helped in shaping several chapters of the present work and has to that extent been regarded as a complement of Kalhana's *magnum opus*.

It is a privilege to express my gratitude to Mr. G. M. Sadiq, Chief Minister, Jammu and Kashmir, who, even in the midst of a strenuous election, spared valuable time to honour this book by contributing the 'Foreword' to it. Thanks are due to the Jammu and Kashmir Academy of Art, Languages and Culture for the contribution made towards the cost of printing this book. I have also to acknowledge my gratitude to Miss Enid Howe and Mr. David French who read these pages in typescript and suggested many improvements.

S. L. Sadhu

Baramulla
March, 1967.

Men Settle in Kashmir

LONG, long ago when the earth was overrun with aboriginal waters, Vishnu adopted the form of a fish to draw a boat into which the goddess Sati had changed herself. The ship was moored to the top of a mountain to the south-west of the valley of Kashmir at a spot which came to be called *Naubandhana*. The boat turned into land, but a very large lake was left in the middle. A great demon, who was given the name of *Jalodhbhava* i.e. 'water-born', grew up and lived in the lake. After great penance he earned the boon that he would never be vanquished as long as he remained in water.

Meanwhile Nila, son of the sage Kashyapa, was appointed king of the *nagas* who had, through the favour of Vishnu, taken shelter here against the persecution of Garuda. He was much upset when Jalodhbhava devastated lands all around, even as far away as Gandhara and Jalandhara*. Nila and his father Kashyapa approached the gods who repaired to the hills surrounding the valley. Brahma, Vishnu and Shiva spotted three lofty peaks near Naubandhana—which explains the names Vishnupad for the Konsarnag lake and Brahma Shukal peak. Not even the gods could match the prowess of the water-born demon. But they knew of the secret of his strength, viz., the boon, and they planned to sap it. With a mighty plough the bed of the lake was struck not far from Naubandhana, the water was drained out and the demon deprived of his power. He was overcome at the end of a futile struggle and exterminated. The gods were pleased to see the beautiful valley emerging

*By Jalandhara is meant the Kangra district rather than the district of that name in the Punjab plains.

after the water was drained and each selected for his haunt the spot that he fancied. Goddesses took the form of rivers in the valley.

Kashyapa through whose intercession the land of Nila and his *nagas* had been freed from the depredations of the 'water-born' addressed Vishnu thus: "This land is fit to be inhabited by human beings, and thus it will be lovely and blessed." The *nagas*, however, refused to dwell together with human beings and consequently Kashyapa pronounced the curse, "You shall dwell with the *paisacas* (goblins)." He declared that every year in the month of Chaitra, the overlord of the goblins, Nikumbhu, went with a large host to fight the wicked goblins dwelling on an island in the midst of the Ocean of Sand far in the north. After fighting the goblins for six months he returned on the fifteenth of the bright fortnight of Asvayuj to repair to the Himalayas for six months. Kashyapa decreed that the land was granted to Nikumbhu for his abode in winter and that men would dwell here in summer.

Nila was upset at the prospect of having to dwell with goblins and with great humility submitted that the *nagas* would dwell with men rather than with cruel goblins. At this stage Vishnu interceded and limited the curse of Kashyapa to only four aeons during which the goblins would live here for six months in winter The *nagas* in this land would dwell with human beings thereafter. He also pronounced that the land

*According to this version based on the ***Nilamatapurana***, Vishnu is said to have struck his ploughshare near the Nilanaga, the present Vernag, to drain the water of the Satisar, and by a stroke of Shiva's trident there Parvati assumed the form of the Vitasta or Jhelum. Another legend, however, maintains that the lake Satisar was drained when the gods struck the bed of the gorge at Khadanyar, below Baramulla. Jalodbhava continued to offer resistance till goddess Durga appeared in the form of a bird and dropped a pebble on the errant demon. The pebble assumed the form of the hillock Haripaivat in Srinagar and the demon was crushed. Chapter XXII refers to a blockade of the gorge once again in the ninth century of the Christian era.

would become famous as *Kashmir* after the name of the sage Kashyapa and that the people living here would perform rites and ceremonies advised by Nila for their own happiness and prosperity.

For four aeons thereafter men from surrounding lands came to Kashmir in the month of Chaitra. They tilled the land, raised crops, gathered the harvest and departed to Darvabhisara* leaving the valley to the flesh - eating goblins. Once an old Brahmin, Chandradeva by name, being weary of life, declined to accompany his fellow - countrymen on their trek out of the valley. When Nikumbhu returned to the valley in Asvayuj, his goblins pounced upon the Brahmin and began to play with him mischievously, much to his distress. Extreme cold to which he was as yet unused almost benumbed him. However, he managed to slip away from the stranglehold of the goblins and running for life he came to the abode of Nila, the lord of the *nagas*. It was at the very spot where the bed of the lake Satisar had been struck by the gods with the plough and the water drained out.

When he reached the spot he found the lord of the *nagas* being worshipped by the chief of the goblins, Nikumbhu, and hundreds of *nagas* and *naga* maidens were in attendance upon him. Chandradeva, the fugitive Brahmin, thought it opportune time to open his case. He fell on his knees before the lord of the serpents and pronounced a hymn of praise preluded with a benediction. Nila felt pleased and addressing the Brahmin in suitable words he invited him to dwell in his (i.e. Nila's) abode. He also bade him choose any boon dear to his heart.

Chandradeva was awaiting just such an opportunity. He portrayed the difficulties of the people of Kashmir in having to vacate their land in winter and ardently prayed that they be permitted to live in the valley permanently. "Let it be so",

* Darvabhisara is identified as the hill tract just outside the valley of the Jhelum between this river and the Chenab. It includes places like Poonch and Rajauri.

replied Nila in an expansive mood; "O most exalted among the Brahmins, let your people abide here for ever, faithfully carrying out the rites and observances necessary for the purpose."

The Brahmin took his abode with the lord of the serpents and passed the happiest six months of his life thus The people began to return from the plains in the month of Chaitra. A few days later came their king, Viryodana. They never expected again to set their eyes on Chandradeva, for they thought he had fallen a prey to the goblins. Great was their astonishment and delight when he greeted them and made obeisance to the king. He related to them all that had happened, giving them a detailed account of the rites* to be observed so that they could live in the valley permanently. On hearing this the people rejoiced. They built dwelling houses and temples, villages and towns, and took a vow to celebrate festivals in honour of deities and other superhuman beings. Some of these festivals and rites continue to this day. The Chaitra festival was celebrated as late as the reign of Zain-ul-abdin (A. D. 1420-70) and the king joined his subjects in the festivities.

* Among the rites prescribed where that (i) the people should drink new wine on the first fall of snow every year and (ii) they should celebrate the birthday of the Buddha, as Vishnu's *avatar*, on the fifteenth day of the bright half of Baisakh. It will be recalled that in his *Dashavataracharita*' Kshemendra, of the 11th century A. D., mentions the Buddha as the ninth of the ten incarnations of Vishnu.

A King is Turned into a Snake

TO visitors entering the valley of Kashmir by air the Srinagar airfield is a familiar sight. Being several hundred feet above the central valley of the Jhelum it is immune from floods. It is not an isolated spot dominating the surrounding areas but has been laid out on a tableland which overlooks the city of Srinagar as it exists today. Standing as a bastion to the city at a distance of about eight miles the offshoots of the tableland run into the far off foot hills.

Many hundreds of years ago Kashmir was ruled by a king called Damodara. He was a Shaivite though in his time the Buddhist faith also claimed many followers He was obviously a good king, for the historian says about him, "He loved a life of good conduct... . .....One hears of his spiritual power even to this day as a marvel of the world." In his days, no less than now, the valley suffered on account of severe rains leading to floods. But as he was keen about the welfare of his subjects, he built stone dykes and raised embankments so that the rivers would not overstep them to harm populated towns or fields smiling with corn. Some of these constructions were so big that in later ages people wondered how ordinary human beings could handle such huge boulders. They were inclined to believe that a race of superior or semi-divine beings had been employed to accomplish the task.

Damodara built a town not far from the present airfield and to the west of it. But the town did not have enough water for its needs and the king decided to divert the nearby river towards it. He, therefore, engaged a tribe of craftsmen to build a dam across the river so as to feed the town permanently. The

Guhyaka craftsmen worked hard and raised an extensive dam on the river at a place called Gudda which it came to be known at first as Gudda-setu and later as Godasoth.

This king, however, came to grief when he thwarted the wish of some Brahmins. One day he had to perform the *shradha* ceremony. He was proceeding to the river to take his bath when he was met by some hungry Brahmins who requested him to give them some food. It was perhaps a late hour for anybody to take a bath, for in those days people generally finished their prayers by the time the day dawned. The king advised the Brahmins patience till he returned from the Vitasta after his bath. When the king paid no heed to their importunities, they thought of impressing him with their spiritual prowess so as to secure from him what they desired. The Brahmans placed the river in front of him and saying, "Behold, here is the Vitasta," they renewed their appeal for food.

The king was obstinate and refused to deviate from his original decision, treating the miracle as a mere delusion. The Brahmins were not to get their food before he took his bath. They were now past their patience. Their wrath was raised and they pronounced a curse on the king. "May you become a *sarpa* (snake) !" they retorted when he said "(*sarpata*) Be off".

Everybody who heard these words of wrath was shocked. There was no intention to deny the Brahmins food. But the two parties were equally vain and did not abide by patience. Ultimately the Brahmins were given food and placated. They were then pleased to prescribe how the king might find salvation. "Your sin", the Brahmans declared, "will he atoned if you listen in one single day to the whole of the *Ramayana*", or till some charitable Brahman recited to him the whole *Ramayana* on the night of the Shivaratri.

Says the historian, "Even to this day people recognize him by the steam of his breath, which the curse has made hot, as he rushes about in search of water far and wide on the Damodara-Suda."

Bombur and Lolre

EVERY country has its tales of love and romance. Some of these centre round a legendary or quasi-historical hero or heroine. The stories of Laila and Majnun, Shirin and Farhad, Yusuf and Zulaikha are very well known as composed in Persian verse or in translation In the Punjab the tale of Hir and Ranjha has been immortalised by Waris Shah. The story of a king of England in our own day renouncing his throne for the love of a lady, though unnoticed by the poet or romancer as yet, constitutes the stuff of which immortal tales of romance have been made. In Kashmir the love story of Lolre and Bombur has left an indelible impress on the literature and culture of the Kashmiri speaking people.

In the ancient past there lived in Kashmir a king whose name was Bombur. He is said to have been a good king and devoted himself to the welfare of his subjects. He was generous and spared neither effort nor expense for the comfort and well-being of his subjects. Indeed, he had won the throne because of these very virtues. His predecessor, Raja Prahlad, had fallen under the spell of an anchorite and having decided to renounce his throne passed the mantle of his sovereignty to his minister Bombur. Thus it was that the latter attained mastery of the kingdom of Kashmir. Once on the throne he bettered his reputation for being a virtuous man and loving master. He found his reward in the loyalty and affection of his subjects.

One day he heard a call from the beyond and in a sense that proved to be his undoing. He caught a glimpse of the face of a lady known by the name of Lolre and his heart was stung deep with her beauty. Married to his first cousin, she

was within the circle of his relations. He was apparently helpless and could not find satisfaction for his infatuation. It is probable that the public opinion at that period was a potent weapon and even ruling chiefs could not afford to take any step in violation of it. Bombur had no hope of seeking the fulfilment of his love with a woman already married, the wife of his cousin. Circumstances thus condemned him to suffer the agony. His love for his beloved was, however, too deep to let him rest in peace and neither the weight of the crown on his head nor zest for the exercise of power was strong enough to beguile him out of his predicament.

Time served only to add to the intensity of his distraction. With the visage of Lolre imprinted on his heart he unburdened his love-laden soul in many a melancholy ode, bewailing the cruel indifference of the beloved. He had neither the inclination nor the time to attend to the affairs of the state and others paid homage to that generous benefactress. Possessed with the thought of his beloved he roamed over hill and dale, calling to witness the intensity of his passion-stricken soul bird and beast, flower and bee, lake and tarn, the winged fairy and the twinkling star. None of them offered any consolation ; his passion merely grew by what it fed on, and awake or asleep he muttered only 'Lolo', 'Lolo'.

The intensity of his passion was, however, not entirely wasted. When it pervaded the vast firmament his wailful longing found entrance into the heart of the beloved and there it began to thrive. Before long Lolre herself was pining for the suitor who had renounced all his own for the love of her. It was too alarming a development to let her kith and kin look on in complacence. In order to escape a scandal they immured her. She was thus beyond doing any harm to her family who thought they would let the lunatic Bombur wail to the moon and themselves breathe in peace. The news that his love had stung Lolre reached Bombur in his self-imposed exile in the wilderness. His love was too unselfish, too other-worldly, too

ethereal to provoke him to an act of retribution against those who had kept her in confinement. His heart had grown weary and thin and this last draught of bitterness plunged him into despair which over-whelmed him to the utter undoing of his mortal body. He succumbed under the load of his love-lorn soul. And Lolre ? She made atonement for her indifference, her unconcern for her lover. She learnt intuitively of the approaching death of Bombur. The angel of death visited her at the same time as he befriended Bombur and both of them died the same moment. At last they were united Both the bodies were cremated on the same funeral pyre.

Lolre and Bombur pined away endeavouring to seek fulfilment of their love. But the tale of their devotion and sacrifice is undying. It has ever since kindled the imagination of the people generation after generation. The numerous odes betokening their love that have taken root in the hearts of the people are a glorious tribute to them. The burden of the odes of Bombur, 'lolo' 'lolo' has passed into the artistic imagination of the community and is used as a complement by poets who have otherwise to wrack their brains. The observation that the reed pipe first grew at the place where Bombur and Lolre were cremated is thus not off the mark.

Chandralekha

EVERY year people from far and near feast their eyes on the scintillating surface of the Seshnag in the valley of the Liddar. This large freshwater mountain lake is unique in its magnificence and beauty. How came it to be there beyond Mount Pisu ? All the world over, geography has given its shape and form to history and is still giving it. In the land of Kashyapa where gods and titans, Nagas and Paisacas, contended for the privilege of settling down in the luscious valleys, geography has been hammered out and moulded by history.

Many centuries ago the country was ruled by king Nara who was also called Kinnara. He founded a city Kinnarapura*, the abode of the *Kinnaras* or *Gandharvas*, on the strand of the Vitasta not far from the present Bijbehara. The city was a 'synonym for paradise', for the shops here 'were richly fed with high streets, the canals were gay with gondolas, and the gardens were colourful with fruits and flowers.'

Once a careworn Brahmin named Visakha came for rest to the edge of a limpid pool of water in the city. This pool was the abode of a *naga* named Susravas. After relaxing for some time in the cool breeze under the shady trees the Brahmin felt refreshed and prepared to eat a little of *sattu* that he carried with him. But before he had taken even a morsel his attention was attracted by the tinkling sound of anklets.

He saw before him two exceedingly beautiful damsels draped in blue shawls. They wore rubies in their ears and a thin

* Though some scholars believe that Narapura or Kinnarapura existed near the present contonment in Srinagar, Stein assigns to it the plain between the plateau of Tsakadar and Bijbehara town.

line of collyrium marked their elongated eyes. These moon-faced lotus-eyed maidens further amazed the Brahmin when he discovered them eating pods of *kacchaguccha* grass. Overcoming his earlier bashfulness he invited them to share his dry food and he learnt that they were the daughters of Susravas, the *naga*. The elder was Iravati and the younger, the more beautiful of the two, was named Chandralekha, the Lady of the Crescent Moon. When he asked them why they ate grass befitting the humble they told him that their father would appear at Taksakanag* (Zevan) on the twelfth day of the dark half of Jeth and would explain everything. Soon after they disappeared.

On the said date the Brahmin found the *naga*, with his hair tuft dripping with water, and his two daughters at the festival of Taksakanag. After the usual greetings the two were soon busily engaged in conversation. In the course of his talk the *naga* explained to the Brahmin how he had fallen on evil days.

The *naga* pointed to a tree nearby under which an ascetic with a clean shaven head was practising austerities. This very ascetic was the keeper of the crops and owing to a spell which had been imposed the *nagas* could not eat the new grain till the keeper had eaten of it. "This fellow", said the *naga* referring to the ascetic, "does not touch it and because of that regulation we are perishing," and sought the help of the Brahmin to enjoy the bumper crop smiling before his eyes. "Please act so that he may fall from his vow," the *naga* pleaded.

Visakha, the Brahman, was anxious to help the *naga*. Day and night he thought of how to induce the ascetic to taste the new grain. Unable to find an easy solution, he resorted to a

* This pool of water exists even now at Zevan. In Akbar's time cultivators offered worship there and poured milk into it to enlist the aid of the deity for a good crop. Cultivation of saffron, according to Abul Fazal, was believed to have originated from it. Pampur, the home of saffron, is not far from the place.

trick not expected of a Brahmin When the ascetic had left for the fields the Brahmin secretly put a few grains into this vessel while his food was being cooked. When he ate it on his return the spell was broken and the *nagas* were free to eat their fill. The lord of the *nagas* poured torrents of rain and the glorious harvest was washed away Susravas invited Visakha to his own abode and entertained him lavishly out of gratitude. Besides granting him wealth he also honoured him with the gift of the peerless maiden Chandralekha, for whose hand he had submitted his prayer.

The Brahmin was exceedingly happy on having attained his ambition. Chandralekha proved to be unexemplified on account of her noble character, good behaviour and extreme dutifulness towards her husband whom she treated as the deity, as enjoined in the sacred books. No task at her home, however humble, was unworthy of being attended to by the daughter of the lord of the *nagas*.

One day, from the balcony of her house she noticed a stray horse attempting to nibble at the corn left to dry in the courtyard. Finding no servant within hearing distance she ran down the stairs to drive the horse away and smacked him. The horse moved away but on his body was left a golden imprint of the palm of the lady. The horse was much sought after owing to the distinction that had been conferred upon him.

As said above, the country was ruled by Nara who, through the reversal of the good fortune of the subjects, became the origin of a series of great misfortunes owing to the vice of sensuality'. He had heard of the beauty of the Brahmin lady and had developed a hankering for her. The imprint of her tapering fingers on the horse burst the smouldering fire into the flame of infatuation and he took leave of all righteousness and duty, decorum and discretion. He tried to win her through emissaries and having failed, he begged of the Brahmin to let him have the lady.

The poor Brahmin, however, would not oblige the king.

in a fit of rage, therefore, Nara ordered his soldiers to bring her to him by force and they raided the house of the Brahmin. Nothing daunted, Visakha, the Brahmin, escaped by a hidden passage and sought refuge alongwith his wife in the abode of his father-in-law, the *naga* Susravas.

On hearing of the wicked deeds of the king the *naga* was blind with rage. He emerged from the pool bent upon avenging the wrongs of Chandralekha. The city of the king was accordingly enveloped in blinding darkness ; clouds gnashed their teeth in deafening thunder ; and the city along with the king was subjected to a terrific shower of boulders. The sister of Susravas, Nagi Ramanya likewise emerged from a cave of the Ramanya hills to assist her brother. Having learnt that Susravas had completed his task she showered boulders on the villages around so that large areas of land were laid waste*.

King Nara thus made his exit from the stage of life along with many of his friends, courtiers and subjects who, fearing his displeasure, had failed to bring him back to the path of duty, justice and righteousness. On second thought even the *naga* was filled with remorse because he had been provoked to commit a hideous slaughter of humanity. He could not stand the denunciation of the people and bade good-bye to the locality. He made his way to the distant mountains where he decided to spend his days in the wilderness, of snow-covered peaks, reckless streams and barren crags. He constructed a new abode for himself beyond Chandanwari on the pilgrim route to Shri Amarnath. In this wise it was that the magnificient lake of Susramnag† (father-in-law's lake) which delights the hearts of thousands of pilgrims every year came to occupy its present position. The Brahmin, now an inmate of the

* "In the stony waste above village Litar I recognise the place where the Ramanya (the Rambhiara river) is supposed to have dropped her stones" (A. Stein). Litar is about eight miles from Tsakadar.

† It came to be known later as Sheshramnag and now as Sheshnag.

household, attained the status of a *naga* and took his abode close by in Zamaturnag, the lake of the son-in-law. Thus it is that the golden imprint of Chandralekha's palm set the Sheshnag in the midst of towering mountains far away from habitation.

A King Enjoys Killing Elephants

DURING the fourth century A. D. India was invaded by a foreign race called the White Huns. These west-Asian horsemen had earlier invaded Europe but were finally defeated in 451 A. D. In India also they were not allowed to rule for long and were finally over-thrown in 545 A. D. One of the last rulers was Miharkula* who, defeated by Yasovarman about 530 A. D. had thus to flee India. While on his flight he changed his mind and persuaded the king of Kashmir to grant him assylum. But he soon repaid the debt of gratitude when he disposed of the ruler and usurped the throne. "His approach became known," says Kalhana, "by the sight of vultures, crows and the like, eager to feed on those being massacred by his encircling army."

In those far off times Kashmir was remote from the plains of India and there was, of course, no system of highways in the modern sense. Even as late as the reign of Aurungzeb it took the king several months to undertake a sojourn to Kashmir and he reached the valley in the month of May/June when he had left Delhi in December of the previous year.

Twelve hundred years earlier Mihirkula wormed his way into Kashmir through these mountain paths. His baggage train included elephants. While ascending the Pir Panchal the foot of an elephant slipped and the tusker went hurtling down the mountain. Life is dear to the beast no less than to man and the unfortunate elephant trumpeted distressfully appealing,

* There is considerable disparity in the chronology of Kalhana but the historians have no doubt as to the identity of the White Huns.

perhaps, to the king for help. But "Mihirkula of violent deeds" enjoyed the fatal moaning in the spirit of the supernatural beings inimical to mankind. So much did his ears feel tickled by the sound that he caused another elephant to be hurtled down in order to cater to his enjoyment. He became intoxicated with it, his appetite for 'monstrous music' grew; and a hundred elephants found their death that day in the gorge of the Pir Panchal to satiate the perversity of the king.† Truly could it be said of the incident reminiscent of Nero :

As flies to wanton boys are we to the gods.
They kill us for their sport.

The spot where the elephant slipped has acquired the name of Hastivanj. With all that Mihirkula founded a shrine in Srinagar, built a town, gave grants to Brahmins and re-established pious observances.

This king once decided to divert the river Chandrakulya.* The labourers confronted a rock in midstream and could not remove it even with all their combined might. The presence of the rock caused an obstruction and the king's plan was thus being wrecked. But the latter was dead set on accomplishing his desire though he found no way out immediately.

At night he had a dream and the gods spoke to him about the problem which was hanging heavy on his heart. It was not a mere rock, they told him, that thwarted his efforts ; his men were striking against the citadel of a mighty *yaksa*. They were bound to fail, for not even an army of labourers could dislodge the *yaksa* as he was an ascetic wedded to celebacy and was bound to repel any efforts to overthrow him by physical might But, continued the celestial beings, the *yaksa* was vulnerable to chastity and were a chaste woman to touch the rock, he would not have the power to obstruct.

* I am unable to identify the Chandrakulya of the above story"
—A Stein
Some people identify Chandrakulya with the present Tsuntikul.

†See Appendix.

The king was delighted, for he had been provided with a double-edged weapon. He could now have the rock removed and, what was perhaps more amusing to him, prick the bubble of the much-vaunted chastity of the nobility and the elite.

The next morning he revealed his dream to his courtiers and commanded that a chaste woman be asked to touch the rock. It was the privilege of the ladies of the palace and of high families to approach the rock in the order of priority and each of them returned with a stain on her fair name when the rock stood still The reputation of so many ladies became suspect that people came to regard the dream as another whim of the king to harass his subjects.

When the ladies of the noble stock had failed to move the rock, the turn to try her luck fell to the lot of a poor woman. Chandrawati was the wife of a potter. Those others who had endeavoured in vain sneered at her when she approached the rock: "This woman who can be tempted by a tinsel toy to foreswear her gods!" But the potter's wife trod with confidence and touched the rock. Lo ! the wonder of wonders! the rock did move eventually at her touch.

The king was full of wrath and had all those women of high families slaughtered who had failed to move the rock. Truly has Kalhana compared him to the God of Destruction.

A King Fights Famine

THE king was in despair. He had been fighting the famine with main and might and yet the elements showed no sign of relenting. Distress and suffering were writ large on the faces of his subjects with their sunken cheeks and faded eyes. The king had thrown open his treasury and gave away freely to the needy to enable them to feed and clothe themselves. These treasures sustained the people for a short while. No treasures, however, can last long when the drain on them is continuous, and the ray of hope on the face of the king faded away as people cried with hunger. The elements wore a menacing look, the same as they had worn for so many weeks, which served to intensify the feeling of desperation among the people.

The king took counsel with his courtiers. "Beset with this severe famine," he addressed them, "we must do everything to save our beloved subjects from the demon of hunger, for the majesty of the king and the gentility of the nobles rests on the well-being of the subjects. Deprived of that support, the nobles turn into commoners and the king loses his right to rule. I have already exhausted the treasury and my personal treasures. In this hour of need I shall not stint giving away the jewels of the queen too. But I am afraid that single handed I shall not be able to cope with this gigantic task... ."

Tunjina, for that was the name of the king, had not concluded when his courtiers begged him to admit them into the brotherhood of the donors. They were nobles by blood and were entitled to that name by their deeds as well. Inspired by the example set by their liege lord they placed all their resources at his disposal. Their sacrifice infected the more

well-to-do subjects and it gave Tunjina some relief to find scores of people sharing his anxiety truly and honestly. But even this was shortlived. The frown of the elements was not mitigated.

It had all been so unexpected. Tunjina was acclaimed to be a good king and his subjects were proud of him. Under his rule people had enough to eat and were well looked after. On this occasion, however, it was quite otherwise. The fields were full of the paddy crop and the ears were green on the stalks. Early in Bhadun, however, the sky was overcast with clouds which descended on the earth in the form of snow, beautifully white but cold and deadly in its effect. The snow-fall was heavy, severe and prolonged. Not even the aged had ever seen snow in this month, and never in such bulk. The whole country was filled with horror, for the appearance of snow in thick layers conveyed the dismal tidings that they would not be able to retrieve a single grain of rice.

What were smiling fields of paddy, emerald and golden, turned into boundless wastes of snow haunted by evil spirits and will-o'-the-wisp. The whole valley was embedded in snow, the plains, the forests and the mountain passes, and all contact with the outside world was lost. Trees which were full of leaves, and luscious ripening fruit came to suffer too on account of this inclement weather. Leafy branches could not sustain the weight of the snow and they crashed burying the fruit. What were roads turned into pools of slush. Destruction and distress prevailed everywhere and the gods continued to smile sinisterly behind the clouds which were glued to the sky. In four or five days people lost all hope. Despair stared them in the face and the demon of starvation stalked out of its haunt. It struck equally the insect on the leaf, the bird in the nest, the quadruped in his lair and the man in the house. "Famine" ! "Famine" ! rose the cry from every direction, an all-out famine for every living creature. Men felt pained at the distressful hunger of their pets or birds of the air no less

than at their own.

This was how the famine was ushered in and, like an army of occupation, it entrenched itself. The king, the courtiers, the nobles and the common people strained every nerve to escape its onslaught but all their efforts were unavailing. The mountain passes being snow-blocked, no relief could be expected from outside. The same barrier prevented the suffering populace from trickling out to the plains. The whole population was left to its fate. In the words of the historian "The love of wife, affection for the son, loving kindness for the parent were forgotten by everyone. People forgot modesty, pride and high birth. The father abandoned his emaciated son begging for food when his own life was at the throat, or the son his father and provided nourishment for himself." Birds and animals having disappeared, bargaining in human *flesh was resorted to.

When nothing could break the malicious spell of the elements even the king lost all hope. Relieving his grief-laden heart before his consort he attributed the dreadful visitation to his sins of the past. "Fie on me, hapless one, in front of whom the sorrow-stricken people who deserve to be helped are perishing .....Having exhausted my means I shall now sacrifice my body in the blazing fire, for I am not able to see such a destruction of my subjects". Thereupon the king's self-restraint broke and he began to sob.

The queen could not stand his proposal to commit suicide. Being made of sterner stuff she replied, "What is this perversion of your judgment that you wantonly intend what befits an irresolute man?" Questioning his title to greatness she admonished, "Devotion to the husband is the rule of dutiful conduct of women, loyalty that of ministers, and single-minded application in protecting the subjects is the sacred duty of kings." She assured him that his subjects would not suffer any

*See Appendix

more and added, "Has my utterance ever been reversed ?."

Having persuaded her lord to desist from committing suicide* and to continue his endeavours the lady went into meditation and lo ! in the morning food in the form of lifeless pigeons fell in each house. The people rejoiced on receiving food from the hidden source ; for it meant that their travail was over. It was so, indeed, because they got their food every day without fail till the sky became spotless, the snow disappeared and the famine came to an end. The virtuous queen founded two asylums at Kaimuh and Ramuh where the needy were fed. She died on the funeral pyre of her husband after thirty six years.

*The agony and distress experienced by Tunjina has given a word to the Kashmiri language. When a person feels hard-pressed on any account and yet is helpless in spite of his utmost endeavours, his state is expressed in the words ***tundijan chhu logmut. Tundijan*** is obviously derived from Tunjina.

The Reanimated Skeleton

TUNJINA who fought the famine so valiantly was succeeded by Vijaya whose name will live beyond the shadow of forgetfulness because he built the town round the shrine of Vijayesvara. During the reign of his son and successor, Jayendra, there lived a wise and pious minister named Samdhiman He adored his master even as a pious and devoted wife adores her husband. The king also reposed full confidence in the minister and did nothing without seeking his advice. This fact made many people jealous of the king's trusted minister and they sought constantly to bring him to disgrace.

"Put not they trust in kings" is an ancient saying and nobody can count upon their unswerving friendship. Samdhiman found it true to his cost when he was dismissed by the king, for the enemies of the minister had succeeded in poisoning his ears. The former counsellor of the king did not, however, take it amiss, his ambition being far different from that of ministers of the common run. He enjoyed his life in retirement even though the king deprived him of all his possessions and reduced him to penury

This was only the beginning of the troubles of Samdhiman who, freed from the worries of the state, devoted himself to the service of Shiva. There was a persistent rumour that after the death of the king the realm would pass into the hands of Samdhiman. This gave a handle to the enemies of the dismissed minister who argued that a rumour does not spread unless it is started. The king was easily convinced by this argument which he who had no son regarded as the thin end of the wedge employed by the subtle minister to bring about his

downfall. To prevent the disaffection likely to be caused thus by him, Samdhiman was put into prison and his feet suffered the agony of heavy fetters in accordance with the practice of those days.

In spite of this Jayendra, the king, did not feel at peace with the world. The thought that Samdhiman may ultimately succeed him on the throne was gnawing him and the only effective way to prevent it was to do away with the former minister while he was still alive. He issued orders that the ex-minister be put to death and Samdhiman was accordingly impaled. His body which lay transfixed thus for many days, was feasted upon by the birds of the air and the beasts of the wilds till the skeleton was picked clean of all trace of flesh.

Samdhiman had one friend who had not forsaken him in his misfortune and that was Ishana, his spiritual *guru* or preceptor. Ishana was grieved to learn of the outcome of the last frenzy of the king and visited the place where Samdhiman died His heart melted with pity when he found the wolves pulling the skeleton away from the stake. He drove them off, pulled out the nail and lifted the skeleton to perform the last rites due to the deceased He tried to decipher the writing on the forehead: "Poverty so long as there is life, ten years' imprisonment, death on the top of the stake, then there will be sovereignty." The person whose skeleton was lying before him had already verified the truth of the first three stages. He wondered if the fourth was also going to be realised. It was obviously a bewildering thought, for who could endow the skeleton with flesh, blood and life ? A little reflection satisfied him that there was nothing beyond the pale of possibility. He recalled that Satyavan had been brought back to life by the entreaties of his devoted wife Savitri, that Arjuna who had been slain in the city of Manipura was restored to life through the favour of his Naga wife and that the god of death had to yield on many an occasion. He was, therefore, filled with eagerness to see the fulfilment of the prophecy and took up his

abode at the very spot where he could keep close watch over the skeleton.

Not long after his nose was tickled by such an extra-ordinary perfume at night that he was keyed upto expect something marvellous. Soon he heard the sound of minstrelsy, the beating of cymbals, the blowing of conches and the vibration of unearthly chords. This was followed by a wonderful sight : *Yoginis* (nymphs) standing in a halo of light. The *yoginis* appeared to be in a state of excitement. "This really promises something extra-ordinary" he thought and, with a drawn-* sword in his hand to ward off any evil effect on himself, he watched the *yoginis* from behind a tree.

With the rising tide of desire for dalliance with a lover, the *yoginis*, drunk with liquor, had failed to find a virile man. They then spotted the skeleton and carried it away. Having been stretched in the centre of the troupe the skeleton was being modelled with all the limbs. In a short while the man was set up complete in all respects. The body was made instinct with life when the *yoginis* with their unearthly power filled it with the spirit of the deceased minister which had not found a new mansion yet and was still wandering. They massaged the body with elysian emollients till he awoke as if from sleep.

The night had worn itself out by the time the nymphs had their fill of amorous play and in a matter of moments they were expected to take themselves away from the sight of the mortals. Ishana was overwhelmed with the fear that on their departure the *yoginis* might despoil him of the limbs bestowed upon him in a moment of passion. In an endeavour to prevent their doing so he proceeded resolutely towards them with a drawn sword and raised a shout. The *yoginis* vanished instantly from view and a voice assured Ishana that they meant no deceit towards the revived skeleton who would not lose any of his limbs. They also re-echoed the prophecy of the renown which was awaiting this man with the divine body.

*A drawn sword is supposed to ward off evil influence.

Samdhiman was clad in celestial garments, with garlands round his neck and adorned with ornaments befitting his divinity. Having regained his memory of the past he prostrated himself before his preceptor Ishana who raised him up and held him in a fond embrace. The two spent some days together, away from the din of the city pondering over the mysteries of life and death and of the unknown. Meanwhile, the news of the restoration to life of the former minister reached the city and the residents of Srinagar, young and old, came out to meet him by the hundred. Though the resemblance to his earthly form in which they knew him was not perfect, the doubts of the people as to his identity were put to rest when they talked to him and were spoken to.

The king of Kashmir, Jayendra, having died without an heir, the throne had no occupant for sometime. The courtiers, the nobles and the people, therefore, approached Samdhiman to accept their allegiance and to rule over them. He did so very reluctantly, having been persuaded by his *guru* Ishana to accept their entreaties. Anointed king in a garden by Brahmins, Samdhiman entered the city escorted by the army. From terraces and balconies the citizens of Srinagar welcomed him with showers of parched grain and flowers, and the sky was filled with blessings and shouts of joy.

Samdhiman ruled for many years and during his rule the land was spared calamities, natural or those engineered by mortals. The king spent considerable time in meditation and was a frequent pilgrim to places consecrated to gods and saints His devotion to the life hereafter grew steadily and began to claim his attention even to the exclusion of the affairs of state. Disaffection began to stir the hearts of some of his subjects. Realising this, Samdhiman decided to abdicate the throne and take to the hills and forest caves in search of Shiva whose devotee he was. "By giving up in my own time fortune, like a courtesan who has ceased to love", he thought, "the shame of a forcible expulsion has luckily been avoided by me.. Like an

actor while I played my part proudly for a long time upon the stage of the realm unto the very denouement the spectators, fortunately, did not lose interest."

The following day he convened a meeting of all his subjects and handing over to them all the insignia of authority entrusted the government to them even as he had been invested with power. Himself he went in the direction of forests and snow-covered hills where he was delighted to hear, free of any anxiety, the flutes of shepherds and the music of rills. He reached the sacred spring of Sodara near the present Narannag and Nandikshetra where he was warmly received by ascetics and saints who attained ecstasy in the worship of Shiva.

A Champion of Non-Violence

WHEN Samdhiman abdicated the throne and betook himself to the hermitages of Nandikshetra in the lap of Haramukh mountain, the people of Kashmir invited to rule over them a prince whose ancestor Yudhistra had been forced to flee the valley. Kashmir maintained close contacts all through the centuries with her neighbours including the foreign countries of Tibet, Sinkiang and Afghanistan. Seeing that there was no strong ruler on the throne there, the mouth of the king of Gandhara watered for the conquest of the lovely territory of Kashmir and he extended patronage to Gopaditya, great-grandson of Yudhistra, with a view to use him in gaining his territorial ambitions. The dreams of the king of Gandhara and Gopaditya, however, failed to materialise. Gopaditya's son Meghavahana was a gifted youth and was believed to have the infallible marks of divinity. The ministers of the kingdom of Kashmir invited him to the land of his forefathers once again.

Gandhara was for a very long time a radiating centre of art and culture and Buddhism thrived in the Kabul valley for a thousand years. Meghavahana had come strongly under the influence of Buddhist beliefs, partly because of the Gandhara environment and partly of his wife who belonged to Buddhist ancestry. He turned out to be a devotee of non-violence. Asoka is renowned as an apostle who renounced war and abjured the use of violence as an instrument of state. Meghavahana had the practice of violence stopped throughout the country from the very day of his accession.

Speaking generally, the people of Kashmir did not abstain from taking meat even in pre-Muslim times. Animal sacrifice

has for long been popular among sections of Hindus who offer meat to deities after the performance of appropriate rites. But irrespective of this tradition and practice the king stopped the killing of animals on any pretext. Even his own coronation was a celebration when no blood was shed. Having got his orders proclaimed throughout the country he provided the butchers with alternative employment. The problem of permitting sacrifices to deities was also got over: the king decreed that sacrifices be offered of the effigies of animals made of butter and offerings of paste be made to spirits. He and his wives built *viharas* and *stupas*.

Having effectively stopped violence and slaughter of animals in his own domain the ambitious king set out to win over other rulers and induce them to desist from violence to living beings. Apparently, he had no difficulty in initiating the overpowered rulers into the principle of non-violence. Once he camped on the shore of the 'lord of the rivers' and felt perturbed about how to cross the waters to win over to the doctrine of non-violence the people who lived beyond, especially the inhabitants of the land of the giants who were devourers of flesh. While he was thus encamped he heard a cry of distress : "Under the very sway of Meghavahana I am being slain". On inquiry he found that a Bhil was about to slay a man in front of the temple of Chandika. The king remonstrated with the Bhil about this foul deed but the latter retorted that he was offering this sacrifice in accordance with prescribed rites to save from inevitable death his infant son on whose well-being depended the lives of many others. The king, eager to save the life of the waif who had been captured from the forest by the Bhil, offered his own life as a sacrifice to the goddess. The Bhil doubted the wisdom of the step taken by the king and advised him to let him propitiate Chandika in the manner he originally proposed. Thereupon Meghavahana started unsheathing his sword to slay himself to save the life of the waif

His hand was, however, held by a celestial figure and he was prevented from self-immolation. The temple of Chandika,

the Bhil and his victim had in the meantime disappeared. The king was, on the other hand, received by Varuna, the ocean-god who enabled him to cross the waters and reach the island of the 'devourers of flesh.' The giants on that island accorded great honour to him and were converted to his doctrine of non-violence. They made presents to the king which, on his return to Kashmir, were exhibited to the people and taken out in a procession every year.

The faith of this campaigner for non-slaughter was put to another severe trial in his own land. One day he was approached by a Brahmin who prayed for permission to offer animal sacrifice to save the life of his only son who was suffering from some fell disease The Brahmin had brought his sick son to the gates of the palace. Meghavahana reminded the Brahmin of his proclamations which were the outcome of his firm belief and deep faith. The Brahmin was by tradition a devotee of the cult of animal sacrifice to the deities and the life of his son was dearer to him than the faith of the king. He, therefore, started questioning the fundamentals of the soveregin's creed. "If because of your insistence on non-violence the boy dies, who else is the cause of his death but the king May you be pleased to give the decision as to the difference between the life of an animal which you want to save and that of at Brahmin which is going to be lost?" The suppliant heaved a sigh for those kings who would kill others to save the life of a Brahmin. Meghavahana was placed in a fix. He did not want to go against the ordinance proclaimed by him which was vital to his faith, nor did he want the Brahmin to suffer death as it would be a case of extreme sinfulness He felt bewildered in this state of indecisiveness. "Spinning in doubt," he thought, "my mind is unable to adhere to either side." To save the life of the Brahmin boy and yet to be true to his pledge he decided to offer his own body as sacrifice to propitiate Durga. He gave the promise to the Brahmin, "Tomorrow I propose to act in your favour" and made up his mind to follow his decision actually.

During the night the goddess Durga appeared to Meghavahana and prevented him from self-immolation. The same night the Brahmin boy was also restored to health. The king's pledge to prevent animal sacrifice in his domain was thus upheld.

How Srinagar was Founded

SRINAGAR shares with very few cities the distinction of being one of the oldest capitals. It was originally founded by Asoka more than two thousand years ago. The site of Asoka's city was on the outskirts of the present city, about one mile to the south of the hill of Shankaracharya. The present city was founded by Pravarasena II around the hill of Sharika or Hariparbat. How it happened is told by the historian.

Pravarasena ascended the throne after the abdication of Matrgupta, protege of Vikramaditya. After having attended to the affairs of the state for about ten years he felt that he could consider how to give material shape to his ambitions. The greatest of these was to build a city that would defeat time and immortalise his name. The existing city was subject to floods frequently. He surveyed several sites but none of these came upto his expectations.

The anxiety to find the right spot and to lay the foundation of the city at an auspicious moment did not let him rest. His mind was occupied with the thought during the day and at night his sleep was disturbed by dreams about the city he had set his heart upon. In one of his dreams he got a clue that the city he was looking for was to the north and that he would learn about it only at night. One dark night he left his palace and strolled further down along the bank of the Jhelum.

He reached a place which was a crematorium and the king saw the area lit up with funeral fires. The place was probably the island of Maisuma and the flames from the pyres near the present Kavji Mohalla projected the shadows of the trees in different directions. The king's attention was drawn

to a mighty form across the river. It was obviously a giant extraordinary even for those hoary days. His eyes were hideous flames and his tongue was a brand of fire directed towards the king. In stature he rivalled the loftiest trees and his girth was commensurate with it. All in all, the giant was an embodiment of terror magnified beyond human conjecture.

The giant extended his arms and with a guffaw unimaginably dreadful he tried to draw the puny human towards himself. Even with all that he failed to disturb the equanimity of the king. In fact the exercise of all his powers to strike terror into the heart of the king provoked laughter from the latter. The giant was happy to note the lofty courage of the king and told him that he was the third individual to whom he had made himself known, the other two being Vikramaditya and Shudraka, both celebrated kings. Of the three he considered Pravarasena to be endowed with utmost courage and daring, as not a trace of awe had entered the heart of this king when he first encountered the giant. Feeling pleased with him he said, "If you come to me I shall answer all your questions and disclose to you anything that you find veiled in mystery. If you find it difficult to cross the river wait a moment till I extend my leg to your side". Having said so the giant bridged the river Mahasarit (the present Tsunti Kul) with his leg and the king strode along the shin, steadying his steps with the help of his dagger, till he reached the other side near what is now called Khudbal.

"Who are you ?" asked the king when he reached the other side.

"I am the Bhairva, Vetal by name, a slave of the Almighty Shiva" was his reply.

The Bhairava told the king that it had pleased his heart to meet so valiant a man as he. He told him that it was his (the king's) ambition to found a city which would exist as long as the mountains. "If you," he continued ' go in the direction of the north the next morning, you will reach a spot spread over

with reddish clay. You should lay the foundation of the city at that very spot at the propitious moment, and the city would last through the vicissitudes of time." The Bhairava indicated the propitious hour for the purpose, caused the king to recross the river and disappeared.

In an age when large cities which have survived the onslaught of centuries are numerous anxiety to build a city that would last appears to be superficial. Over a thousand years ago, however, small cities appeared to be as fragile as breath and very few of the famous cities of the age have actually survived. Only a well-built and well governed city could stand the buffets of time in the shape of conflagration, invasion, epidemic or famine besides the calamities of a geographical nature like floods and drought. The valley of Kashmir is dotted with the remains of ancient capitals that lasted a few generations only.

The next day the king surveyed the land to the north as advised by the Bhairava and came to the hill of Hariparbat which was a few miles from his palace. Here he observed all the indications mentioned by the Bhairava, including the colour of the clay. He drove away a mighty demon who haunted the place, laid the foundation of his city at the propitious hour and gave it the name Pravapura.

The king made arrangements for building the new capital. He entrusted the task to Jaya who was a well-known architect. At the centre of the town he built a temple dedicated to Shiva. Some people believe that the temple existed by the site of Ziarat Bahaud-Din Sahib. It is said that the Dal Lake did not exist then and a meadow called the Vetalinimarg stood where the placid waters stretch to-day and it was only later that a mighty earthquake filled the meadow with water and converted it into a lake. The city of Pravarasena therefore suffered from a scarcity of water. The king circumvented the difficulty by diverting the course of the Vitasta or Jhelum. A barrage was raised by sinking boats laden with earth and stones

into the deep river bed and the place has come to be known as Nawapora or the abode of boats, from *nav* meaning a boat. A canal therefore flowed near the foot of Hariparbat. He also had a causeway built to facilitate communication

Hariparbat became the radial centre of the city and from its summit could be commanded a panaromic view of the lofty and magnificent buildings, gardens and moors, hill and dale stretching all around to the distant hilly ramparts of the valley. There were few cities in India to compete with it. Having taken pains to make his city magnificent the king was anxious to take all steps to protect it from any harm He invoked the aid of gods and other powers unseen by man and therefore raised numerous temples and shrines to these deities and endowed land for their upkeep. Five of the temples built by him were unrivalled in magnificence. They were (1) Maheshwari near the foundations of which Sultan Sikander built the Jama Masjid, (2) Lokeshwari which was converted into a burial ground for the Sultans of Kashmir and is now known as the tomb of Badshah. (3) Parvareshwari near Pokhribal, (4) Kalishwari, dedicated to the goddess Kali which was later pulled down and close to its foundation was raised Khanaqahi Muala and (5) Sadbhavashri which is now the tomb of Sultan Qutub-uddin. He also consecrated eight shrines to eight Bhairavas or inferior deities charged with the protection of the city. Besides this holy men approached by him in all humility were requested to give their benedictions. They included Vardhaman-swami near the hill of Shankaracharya and Sangramswami at Harwan. In the course of his visits to Harwan to have the benefit of conversing with the holy man he frequently stayed at a place a couple of miles on this side and built a mansion which came to be known as Shalamar. Gradually a village developed there and later on the garden of unrivalled beauty was laid out in the form in which it exists there today.

Among the better known kings of ancient Kashmir new capitals were founded by the illustrious Lalitaditya, Jayapida,

Avantivarman and Shankarvarman. Time has effaced their cities Parihasapura, Jayapura, Avantipura and Shankarpatan. But Pravapura, the city of Pravarasena has withstood the ravages of time and continues to be the city of lofty buildings and gardens, canals and meadows. The only effect of the centuries is that the name of Pravarasena has ceased to be associated with it and the city continues to be called by its original name Srinagar.

The Plebeian Son-in-Law

THE *Rajatarangini* opens with an account of Gonanda I, the founder of a house of kings who ruled Kashmir for hundreds of years. Gonanda participated in the Mahabharata war wherein he embraced the earth in an encounter with Balarama, the brother of Sri Krishna The last ruler of the house of Gonanda was named Baladitya. He is referred to as 'Baladitya of glorious power', the terror of hostile kings.

Baladitya was gifted with a beautiful daughter but had no male issue. Anangalekha, the gazelle-eyed princess, was the 'shimmering moonlight on the ocean of love'. Once when she was seated by the side of her father an astrologer, reading the indicative marks on her person, declared that after the death of the king, Baladitya, the sovereignty would pass from the house of Gonanda and kiss the feet of his son-in-law, the husband of Anangalekha

Much though he loved his daughter, Baladitya did not react favourably to the prediction of his astrologer. In fact he took it as a timely warning and decided to make sure that his son-in-law had no chance of succeeding to the throne. He wanted to turn the course of destiny with human endeavour. To secure this end he decided to give his daughter in marriage to a young man who had no blood tie with the royal family or any ruling house.

The king had it broadcast that he would give his peerless Anangalekha in marriage to the most handsome young man. He thus kept the door open for the rejection of princes and members of ruling families. His choice ultimately fell on a young man named Durlabhvardhana who was an official in charge

of horse-fodder. It was a rare distinction for the petty official in the army remount to be raised to the lofty position of the son-in-law of the king. Nobody, however, knew why the king had thus deviated from the long standing tradition and bestowed his daughter on a plebeian. Meanwhile Durlabhvardhana who was gifted with a rare charm of appearance and wit came through his wedlock to possess wealth and fortune that he had never dreamt of.

Baladitya's plans succeeded so far and he went about his business in peace, thinking that his son-in law did not stand a chance to claim his throne after him and that the rule of the house of Gonanda was bound to survive his death. On his part Durlabhvardana was conscious of the shortcoming of his birth. The idea of his securing the throne did not take root in his heart and he was content with the good fortune that befell him.

But his good fortune was not absolute as he soon discovered to his dismay. Anangalekha, his wife, was not faithful to her husband. Being the only child of her parents she had grown into a spoilt child. The intoxication of youth and the meekness of her husband made it more difficult for her to restrain herself on the slippery path. Detecting her indifference to him and her absolute lack of affection, he was consumed with sorrow and his body grew thin.

One night when he could no longer bear the pangs of sorrow on account of the corruption of her soul, Durlabhvardana ventured to slip into the interior chamber of his wife. The sight that met his eyes there petrified him at first and next sent his body aflame with wrath. He discovered his wife relaxed in slumber and her state convinced him that she had enjoyed intimacy with her lover who was lying by her side. Who had succeeded the most handsome youngman in the affections of the princess, Anangalekha ? He was Khankha, the minister of Baladitya. Two other brothers of Khankha, named Satrughna and Malava were also ministers and the three had founded a convent and a temple and built an embankment. Notwithstand-

ing that, Khankha cast longing eyes on the princess, his master's daughter. He gained access to her chamber by offering bribes to her attendants or by conferring honour upon them. He had thus come to possess her mind completely and enjoyed her company unmindful of any rival or risk.

When Durlabhvardhana found his wife thus, the gnawing pangs of jealousy urged him to seek relief by beheading her paramour A little reflection mede the unfortunate husband restrain his hand. Women, he came to think, who were pursuers of physical love, pulled men downwards. "Why should a sense of ownership of gazelle-eyed women possess sensible men?" he ruminated. Ultimately he overcame his passion for vengeance But before leaving the chamber he wrote on the edge of the scarf of Khankha, "Remember that you have not been slain though you deserved to be killed."

The little piece of writing helped Durlabhavardhana to gain the throne. After he had left the chamber of his wife Khankha woke up and read the sentence. He was overcome with gratitutde for the generosity of the king's son-in-law who had spared his life and forgetting Anangalekha he resolved to requite him. In course of time Baladitya, the king, passed away and having no male issue his throne remained unoccupied for sometime. There was a wide diversity of opinion among the courtiers and the elders as to the successor. Khankha took the loose ends of this political and diplomatic activity into his own hands and having won the support of the principal leaders he had Durlabhvardhana annointed king in accordance with the rites. Thus did the minister requite his gratitude and thus was the prophecy of the astrologer fulfilled. Karkota Naga whose offspring he really was had begotten* him for the crown when his mother had taken a purificatory bath at the spring, though the people did not know it.

* "Durlabha", says Cunningham, "is said to have been the son of a *Naga*, or Dragon. By this appellation I understand that his family was given to ophiolatry, or serpent worship, which had been the prevailing religion of Kashmir from time immemorial.
The Ancient Geography of India

The Merchant of Rohtak

DURLABHVARDHAN, formely of the department of 'provender, ruled Kashmir for thirty six years and founded the Karkota dynasty which produced rulers like Lalitaditya and Jayapida. He was succeeded by his son Durlabhaka whom his mother Anangalekha, regarding him as her father's heir, gave the appellation of Pratapaditya in accordance with the tradition of the dynasty of her father Baladitya.

Pratapaditya gave peace to the country and many merchants from different states were thus encouraged to settle there. Among them was a merchant of the Bania caste who hailed from Rauhitaka or Rohtak The merchant was pious and magnanimous and built a rest-house or convent in Kashmir for the Brahmins who travelled thither on pilgrimage for practices of penance or meditation, Kashmir having been a well-known place of pilgrimage and learning from remote ages Pratapaditya was obviously pleased with this deed of the merchant and invited him to the palace out of a desire to express his appreciation.

As a guest of the king the merchant received an honour worthy of his host. He stayed in the palace for the night and the next morning when the king by way of courtesy inquired if he had spent the night comfortably, the merchant complained of a headache caused by an excess of soot in the lamps. It came as a surprise to the King that anybody could be so fastidious about the traces of soot coming from the palace lamps, and he wondered what the sources of light in his own house could be which were proof against the sooty odour. The king did not, of course, expose his thoughts to the merchant but

expressed a desire to see the merchant's house and the latter extended the invitation to him in befitting words.

Not long after the lord of Kashmir was welcomed as an honoured guest by the merchant. At night Pratapaditya was amazed to see that light was radiated from lamps made of jewels.

This gave him an inkling into the immense wealth and sophisticated taste of the merchant that expressed itself in this splendour. Pratapaditya looked small in his own eyes and it was now clear to him why the merchant had complained of a headache caused by the soot when he was the king's guest. There were some more surprises for the royal guest, and he was persuaded to accept the hospitality of his friend for more than one day and to extend his stay. He enjoyed luxury and honour befitting his distinguished rank and worthy of the wealth and ingenuity of his host.

On one occasion in the course of this visit the king caught a glimpse of the figure of his hostess, the merchant's wife, as she was amusing herself in the privacy of her terrace. Her face was like the moon and her limbs were the embodiment of perfection Her breasts were full and her hips well matched. As she looked towards the king 'her eyes stretched wide up to the ears.' The king felt that she held the secret of the felicity of love and his heart was touched with desire. She shifted behind a column but continued to look at the king again and again, the outcome of a feeling of sympathy for the royal host whose heart she knew she had captivated. He retired to his apartment pensively.

The King had got himself involved in an embarrassing situation. He could not forget the lovely sight that had got indelibly imprinted on his mind and he felt that he could not make himself happy unless he enjoyed the bliss of her company and love. Yet she was a married lady, the wife of his friend and his hostess. Aware of his responsibilities as a ruler which made it incumbent upon him to be righteous and beyond the

shadow of reproach or scandal he was filled with remorse on account of the 'intolerable reversal' of the conduct expected from even the humblest citizen. "Where the king himself commits abduction of the wives of the subjects," he ruminated, "who else indeed is there who would punish the transgression of the moral law?" But no amount of self-reproach enabled him to forget the lotus-eyed wife of the merchant.

In course of time the king, consumed with desire, grew thin and emaciated like a reed and many people learnt of the secret of the merchant's wife. The delicate matter was at last whispered into the ears of the merchant. Far from flying into jealous passion the merchant showed remarkable balance and enviable forbearance. Regarding the problem philosophically, he came to the conclusion that 'a moment of life was worth an age of good fame and that wide-spread reputation could never be an elixir to the ears of the dead'. He therefore approached the king and expostulated with him for inflicting suffering on himself and letting himself be restrained by the law. "When the life of a living creature is in jeopardy", he advised him, "there is nothing whatsoever which he may not do."

The merchant urged the king to accept his wife as his own and assured him that life itself was of no value to him in the interests of the sovereign. "Let there be no consideration about me on your part", the merchant submitted. The king's mind was for long treading the razor-edge of indecision between the pull of the elephants of desire and the heavy weight of propriety. The words of the merchant, full of sincerety and wordly wisdom, considerably lightened the burden on his heart and he almost made up his mind to welcome to his palace the lady who had haunted him ever since he had seen her. It appeared, however, that he did not feel strong enough for the task

The merchant was conscious of the king's reluctance in transgressing the social and moral law, and out of his concern for the king he came forward with a solution that would salve the conscience of his royal friend. The lady who had bewitch-

ed the heart of Pratapaditya was an accomplished dancer and the merchant volunteered to offer her in that capacity to a temple and advised the king to take her from there. Many kings had honoured temple dancers with wedlock and Pratapaditya reflected that he could escape public odium and self-reproach if he accepted the lady under such circumstances.

The lady became his consort eventually and won approbation for her noble deeds, thus casting into the background the frivolity of her conduct in the past. She built a temple dedicated to Shiva. She became the mother of several children to the king who attained renown, including Lalitaditya Muktapida.

A Victim of Black Art

DURLABHKA alias Pratapaditya was succeeded by Chandrapida, his eldest son by the divorced Bania lady of Rohtak. The new king discharged his duties to the satisfaction of his subjects, for he was wiser than his ministers. What he cared most about, however, was the observance of the law in spirit and letter. He would never permit himself to deviate from this course, no matter what the urgency. It appears that he wanted to keep clear of the predicament of his father who got round the difficulty in marrying the lady of his choice by means not above reproach.

The king desired a temple to be built and consecrated to Tribhavanaswamin. The alignment for the construction was laid at a place where stood a cobbler's but in a corner. The officials asked the latter to shift elsewhere and gave him the assurance that he would be compensated for his loss and inconvenience. Probably a different department was responsible for making out the amount due to the cobbler and nothing was paid to him by the time the officials in charge of the construction wanted him to demolish the hut. The cobbler, therefore, refused obstinately to permit the new construction.

The officials reported the matter to Chandrapida and earned his displeasure on account of their failure to satisfy the cobbler before proceeding with the work. He had the construction stopped, for he did not want the officials to go ahead under the impulse that they were right and acting under the orders of the king. "If we ourselves who are the judges of what is right or otherwise encourage what is unlawful, who should tread the path which is according to the law ?"

The next day the sturdy cobbler sought an audience with the king. As he was a member of the lowest caste, an untouchable, he was received in the vestibule and the king offered him the price that he chose to name.

The cobbler was, however, cast in a different clay and he complained to the king how his sense of self-respect was hurt by the officials who expected him to vacate his dwelling merely because the king wanted it. "The distress of a man at the seizure of his house," he told the king, "could be described either by an immortal fallen from the *vimana* or by a king deposed from sovereignty." He told him that his hovel of mud was no less dear to him than the palace was to a king and that he was not going to oblige the officials.

The king who understood it to be a case of injured pride, went to the cobbler's hut in person and purchased it for money which the owner received gladly. The cobbler added, "Dharma appeared before Yuddhistra in the form of a dog to test his righteousness, so did I, an untouchable, to-day in your case. O King! yielding to an inferior under the compelling influence of the Law is worthy of you." The king, after having set such a noble precedent had the temple built and consecrated to Tribhavanasvamin.

Not long after another test was set to the king's instinct for justice and righteousness Once a Brahamin woman submitted a prayer to him in the audience hall. She complained that her husband had been deprived of his life while in bed and held the king responsible for the transgression of the moral and social law by somebody in the land ruled by him. In answer to the inquiries made by the king the woman submitted that her husband was gentle and innocent, cool in mind, soft of speech, free from greed or envy, easy of address and a lover of virtue, and that she could not think of anybody having taken his life because of hatred or enmity. She gave but one clue, that of another Brahmin associate of her deceased husband, a resident of the island of Maksikasvamin, the modern Maisum, who being inferior in studies and having

failed in competitive fame might have resorted to this foul deed with the help of sorcery* in which he was well versed. The woman demanded justice and having already abstained from touching food, expressed her resolve to continue her hunger strike till the culprit was found and punished.

The unnatural death of any of the king's subjects was a bad enough reflection on his rule, but much worse was the death of a good and learned Brahmin. By her hungerstrike th petitioner imparted a peculiar urgency to the need for tracing out the culprit. She thus made the task of the king more difficult. She named the person whom she suspected but the king, as the lord and father of the subjects entrusted to his care, could not act on the mere suspicion of the petitioner ; and the king in the person of the illustrious Chandrapida who respected the observance of the moral law above everything else would apportion no blame unless, to use an oft-quoted oriental expression, milk was separated from water. He interrogated the Brahmin named by the woman but could not come to any reliable conclusion as to his guilt. In this process the Brahmin woman re-emphasised her plea that the Brahmin was an adept in the use of sorcery, but the king did not want to prejudge the issue and reprimanded her, "If the guilt is not proved, what are we to do ?" The woman had no answer to this and merely repeated her feeling of distress, "I refrained from following my busband in death because I was anxious for retaliation on the murderer ..... I have been starving for the last four days and if no justice is meted out, I shall starve myself to death".

Chandrapida was no wiser in the matter even though he had used all his wits and exhausted practically all the means of arriving at the truth. There was only one avenue left open to the king and that was to pray for light from God. The king, therefore, kept a solemn fast and sought redress for the wrong from Tribhavanasvamin to whom he had already consecrated a temple. On the fourth night of the fast the god, Vishnu, ap-

*See Appendix

peared to him in a dream and instructed him to put into practice for the investigation of the truth a method that was ordinarily not meant for *kaliyuga* but was being recommended because of the commendable spiritual power of the royal devotee.

In accordance with the instructions of the god the king had the courtyard of the temple of Tribhavanasvamin strewn with rice powder. The Brahmin on whom the suspicion lay was asked to tread round the sanctum in the manner of devotees offering prayers. On this occasion this had to be done at night as the King had been forewarned that during the day the sun removes all evil. When the Brahmin did so, a careful observation of the rice powder revealed that behind the imprint of his footsteps there was the trail of the footsteps of a female spectre called *brahmahatya*. These answered the description revealed to the king in the dream. The guilt of the Brahmin was thus proved beyond a doubt to the satisfaction of the king and he was punished, though being a Brahmin he was exempted from capital punishment The woman was satisfied and ended her hunger-strike.

Owing to his spiritual power he was able to trace a crime committed through the practice of sorcery. Unfortunately, however, this embodiment of justice and upholder of the moral law himself fell a victim to the black art which resulted in his death. His brother Tarapida grew jealous of his power and engaged the very Brahmin to practise sorcery upon the king himself. The Brahmin was already enraged owing to the punishment awarded to him. The encouragement received from Tarapida, the younger brother of the king, emboldened him to use every arrow in his quiver with the result that Chandrapida actually succumbed to the foul practice. He had upheld the tradition and spared the Brahmin his life but the deed recoiled upon him and the ungrateful sorcerer caused his death. While he was on his death-bed the necromancer was brought to him to receive his punishment but the king graciously for-

gave him saying that the blame lay on him who had made use of the sorcerer.

Chandrapida's brother Tarapida ascended the throne. Fearing the power of the Brahmins he began persecuting them on trifles. Through secret sorcery they succeded in putting an end to his life at the end of a reign of only four years.

Vinayadatta

RANADATTA was a king who was married to an extremely beautiful damsel said to have been taken out of water miraculously by one Vratasen of the Deccan. The lady gave birth to a son Vinayadatta. At the age of eleven the young prince went on a pilgrimage to the shrines and sacred places in India. On his way back he met a holy man named Ganapati in the Sivalak hills and was accepted by the sage as his protege. Vinayadatta studied at his feet and had to undergo strict discipline, so much so that for a period of twelve years he did not take anything except a daily cup of milk. He thus attained purity of mind and spiritual eminence. At the end of twenty years he returned to Kashmir at the behest of his preceptor and spent a year at the temple of Jeshtheshwar on the hill of Gopadari or Shankaracharya.

Just then the throne of the country fell vacant under strange circumstances. One day the king, Ranadatta, and his queen entered the cave at Bumozuva near Mattan and were not seen again. The whole army together with the populace combed every inch of space for three days in their effort to restore the king to the throne, but all in vain. On the fourth day a snowfall occurred in the month of Savan (i.e. July-August); it brought about a landslide and resulted in the death of a large number of troops.

The nobles therefore approached Vinayadatta and entreated him to ascend the throne, but he declined the offer. When the repeated entreaties of the nobles brought forth no fruit, people came to him in hundreds and thousands and persuaded him to become their ruler. Before finally giving his consent he asked the people to take several vows. He laid down

no one in his kingdom should tell a lie, no one should break his word, no one should eat anything that did not belong to him and that no one should kill or injure animals or birds. The people were bent upon making him their ruler to such an extent that they took the vows. When he was convinced of their good faith and honesty, he came out of the temple and built for himself a habitation at Gagribal at the foot of Shankaracharya hill. He also got two granaries built nearby to store the revenue to the state from the two halves of his kingdom, viz. Maraz (i e., the southern half) and Kamraz (the northern half). He had it proclaimed that at the end of the year his subjects should voluntarily deposit in the two warehouses a tenth of the yield of their lands as their contribution to the state. The people obeyed him and carried out his wishes accordingly. Consequently he discharged all officials entrusted with the machinery of civil administration and his subjects neither interfered with others nor suffered on account of the interference of others.

He appointed his brother Bikramadatta to command the army which had to be maintained to protect the state against aggression from outside. The king handed over the key of the granary for Kamraz to his brother. He was asked to open the door of the granary at the end of the month and to let the troops have their salary in kind. He himself kept the key of the other warehouse and every evening distributed among the poor and the needy whatever was stored there during the day and did not keep anything over for the next day. Thus there was nothing in the warehouse-cum-treasury to tempt the king. Even if there was anything left over, he who had given an oath to his subjects not to take anything that did not belong to them would not partake of what had not been raised with his own labour He maintained himself not on a portion of the land revenue, not on the offerings from his subjects but with his own exertions. He broke a piece of fallow land and cultivated it for his own needs. Of course, he deposited one-tenth of the produce like his fellow citizens

It is said that in his reign honest and god-fearing people lived happily and did not suffer harm or discomfort on any account. Even animals and birds enjoyed a period of bliss, unknown to that kind. If any of his subjects hesitated in paying the tithe to the state he got into one severe predicament or another. If anyone appropriated what was not his, punishment was inflicted upon him from some unknown quarter and if a person was guilty of an act of high-handedness his arm withered.

The historian Ratnakar has assigned the period 531-578 B. S. to Vinayadatta but other historians have not mentioned him in any detail. Whether such a king really existed or whether the account of his reign is the outcome of an exercise in imaginative creation of an ideal primitive agricultural state is not quite certain. But the tale of Vinayadatta has deeply impressed the consciousness of the people of Kashmir. Even in this sophisticated age whenever anybody turns out to be unexpectedly good, honest or straightforward, the people say, "The age of Vinayadatta has returned".

A Snare for a King

IN his long and eventful rule lasting over thirty-six years, (AD 695-731), Lalitaditya created history. The two kings immediately preceding him had fallen victim to the art of sorcery practised upon them by Brahmins on the instigation of interested persons. But Lalitaditya was a mighty king and his resolute will made him proof against all the dark shafts of witches and necromancers. As to his ambition the historian has well said, "For rivers which have set out from their own region the ocean is the limit but nowhere is there a limit for those who are frankly aspiring to be conquerors." His ambition for conquest was never satiated. His enemies sometimes took advantage of it and involved him in grave dangers. Ultimately he lost his life in one such expedition for conquest.

Once when he was on a compaign, a man threw himself before the elephant on which Lalitaditya was seated. The man bore fresh wounds on his body and the very sight of the blood flowing from his nose and his limbs evoked pity. He prayed to the king for protection against the tyrant whom he described as their common enemy. The king was filled with pity and inquired of the unfortunate petitioner how he had sustained his injuries. The latter made submission that he came from a land on the edge of the Sea of Sand (Gobi desert) As the minister to the ruler he had advised his master to make submission to the high and mighty Lalitaditya in whose cause he was proud to be a humble worker. His advice had not only been rejected but he had also been subjected to humiliation and dire punishment the marks of which, his humble testimony to his friendship for Lalitaditya, needed no further explanation The king's pride was hurt even while

his heart was swelling with pity. While he had the wounds of the person attended to by competent persons chief among whom was Cankuna or Tsiang Kuin, a trusted minister whom the king had invited from Central Asia, and his brother-in-law Isanachandra, he promised the victim of his friendship that he would punish his master, the obstinate ruler.

The incident remained in the dark recesses of Lalitaditya mind for sometime as his hands were full with another campaign. When the time was opportune and he was all by himself, the man once again provoked the king to punitive action against his master saying that he safeguarded his frail body merely 'because this chastening hope of vengeance is seducing me' and advised the king that 'the injury to be inflicted on the foe should appear like the reverberating echo of a voice in a narrow valley.' He, however, forewarned the king of the difficulties involved in this campaign. He informed him that his master was at a distance of three months' march from the place and that he would flee his state on hearing of the arrival of the mighty invader. It would, therefore, not be possible for Lalitaditya to punish him To avoid this disappointment the minister revealed to him a shorter route only a fortnight's march which was, however, devoid of water "If water lasting a fortnight could be carried," he told the king, "it is advisable to follow this short route."

The alternative plan presented by the minister appealed to the king because it was expeditious and based on surprise. Accordingly he followed this route. In course of time their supplies of water were exhausted even though the troops needed it in greater quantities as they marched over the hills or the oceans of sand. Every day the soldiers on the march came to feel increasing strain on their bodies and there was a weakening in their morale. Lalitaditya once asked the minister how far his land was. To this the latter mockingly replied, "Does your highness ask for the enemy's land or the realm of Death?" He disclosed that out of loyalty for his master and utter disre-

gard of his own life he had played a ruse upon the intrepid king who was artfully led into the jaws of death along with his army. Proud at the apparent fulfilment of his mission the minister sneeringly told the king that the 'lord of the earth' had been transported to the midst of an ocean of sand where the dry waves would engulf him. At this juncture the news spread through the surging ranks of the army and the timid among them started wailing loudly.

This was a predicament unforeseen even by a bold and sagacious commander like Lalitaditya. But his nerve remained unaffected. To dismiss the fears of his soldiers he raised his arm and shouted, "Your loyalty to your master pleases me immensely even though we have been placed in a difficult situation. But I am the embodiment of impregnability and your effort suffers with me even as iron cannot stand the stroke of diamond. Your limbs have suffered in vain, for at my command the earth will reveal its hidden waters."

Having said this the king seized his spear and began to scratch the earth. One of his ministers Cankuna, an alchemist, was well-versed in geology and metallurgy who had brought much gold into the treasury by his alchemy. The king, assisted no doubt by the experts, struck water and a stream welled up. The troops felt refreshed and continued their march into the country of the minister with the mutilated limbs. The ruler of that land was punished for his crooked ways.

The Other City

LALITADITYA founded several towns. His ministers and his queens also endeavoured likewise to have their memories similarly perpetuated. These latter were probably no bigger than small villages. Of the towns founded by the king the foremost were Lalitapora, which still exists in the form of Letapur, a few miles above Pampur on the main Srinagar-Jammu highway, and Parihasapura, a few miles below Srinagar on the Jhelum. The ruins of the last named have been unearthed by archaeologists. Apart from the palaces and other houses that were built in that town, Lalitaditya built magnificent temples dedicated to Vishnu and other gods with images of gold, silver, bronze, etc. He also built *viharas* and quadrangles for the followers of the Buddha.

This city was thus resplendent with wealth and glory as befitted the favourite capital of a mighty and ambitious king. Srinagar, the primordial capital of Kashmir, founded originally by Asoka and shifted five miles northwards by Pravarasena, was divested of some of its glory when the king, the courtiers and the nobles forsook it for the new capital. With all that, however, Parihasapura had the vigour and vanity of an upstart, the pride and presumptuousness of a bejewelled courtesan who has newly won the favours of the king. On the other hand, the city of Pravarasena possessed the wisdom and respectability accumulated through the ages, something of the timelessness associated with ancient races and cultures. Even the king felt that in spite of the wealth and wonders of Parihasapura, people could not forget Srinagar with all the accretions of age it carried.

On one occasion the king was staying at Parihasapura, enjoying the company of the ladies of the household. He was flushed with wine and the conversation turned on the comparative beauty of the two cities. The praise bestowed on Srinagar provoked him and calling his officers he commanded them to set fire to the city of Pravarasena which, the people held, rivalled the city he had founded.

The officers were thus faced with a grave dilemma. They would not and could not set ablaze Srinagar with its thousands of houses, temples, *viharas* and palaces. In that city dwelt learned men and wise, for being at the confluence of several highways of culture and scholarship it dominated India, China and Central Asia. It was a centre of trade too. No one could, therefore, heartlessly set fire to a city like this, raze it to the ground and be the victim of the curses of the innocent, and eternal ignominy at the hands of the learned scribes. Yet a command was a command and there was no one in the realm who could willingly incur the displeasure of the mighty Lalitaditya They knew that the king was in a fit of intoxication and before the effect of wine wore off he could order the decapitation of the officers for disobeying him with the same disregard with which he had desired the destruction of the city where he was annointed.

In this predicament the officers sought the counsel of Mitrasarma, the wisest, the most devoted and the most sagacious of all the ministers in the realm. As expected, he discovered a solution even in that emergency. He ordered that the caval ry haystacks be burnt; and as the officers carried out the instructions to their immense relief, Lalitaditya witnessed the sky lit with flames and felt satisfied that the capital of his creation would thenceforth reign unrivalled as the most glorious and beautiful city in the kingdom.

The intoxication on the king ultimately wore off and he was filled with sorrow that he had caused the city of Pravarasena to be turned into cinders. He very well visualised the misery

and destitution that his perversity would have caused to rich and poor alike and was quite ashamed of himself for having succumbed to a fit of jealous frenzy like a vulgar barbarian or a coarse witch. The ministers found him heaving sighs of remorse and with pride informed him that what he had witnessed at night was more like an occurrence in a theatre than one of real life which it had simulated. The king was immensely pleased to learn that Srinagar had been spared the doom and that all he had to be ashamed of was an unbecoming order and not its implementation. He well visualised the calamity that might befall his subjects if he was provoked on any other occasion to issue commands likewise. The ministers who had satisfied the king's craving and yet spared the city received euologies from him and he directed that in future the orders given by him while under intoxication should not be carried out.

The Giants of Gauda

WHILE recounting the faults of Lalitaditya Kalhana mentions an instance of his breach of faith 'worthy of ordinary kings'. Twelve hundred years ago Kashmir attracted visitors who undertook distant journeys in search of learning,* like the illustrious Hiuen Tsang, or in the garb of pilgrims. In these days the shrine of Shardhaji (the goddess of learning) in Kashmir attracted many pilgrims The shrine is located to the north in the valley of the Kishenganga in the system of hills surrounding the valley of Kashmir and is at present under the occupation of Pakistan. Shardhaji was an important centre of learning too.

The king of Gauda in Bengal expressed a desire to undertake a journey through Kashmir and pay homage to the goddess of learning at Shardhaji. But he wanted to be reassured about his safety while in the realm of Lalitaditya because he could not probably be permitted to take all steps necessary for his security and protection. The king of Kashmir gave the assurance ; but who was going to try a defaulter for breach of faith in those hoary days ? The intending pilgrim wanted the assurance of Lalitaditya to be weighed with greater solemnity and the latter offered the holy Parihasakesava as his surety.

Parihasakesava was the patron deity of the splended capital. Parihasapur built by Lalitaditya about a dozen miles below Srinagar. In this city the king built magnificent temples dedicated to Vishnu while his ministers Mitrasarma and Cankuna built respectively a temple in the name of Shiva and a *vihar*

* In his *Desopadesa*, Kshemendra, a contemporary of Kalhana, makes fun, among others, of the Guada students studying in Kashmir. 'Lean and skeleton-like,' he says' they gather strength and grow fat.'

with a stupa. Foremost amongst these temples was that of Parihasakesava which contained an idol of pure silver in the making of which went nearly a hundred maunds of the metal. When Lalitaditya, therefore, swore by his deity to grant protection to the Gauda king, the latter felt not a trace of doubt and undertook the pilgrimage.

It is not known how long it took the king of Gauda to reach Kashmir. Almost a thousand years later the Mughal emperors took several months to cover the journey from Delhi to the valley ; and Bengal was a long way off beyond dense tropical forests, mighty rivers and stretch upon stretch of the plain under the beating sun of India. Having reached Srinagar the royal pilgrim proceeded north to Sopore at the mouth of the Wular lake and thence to Trigrami or modern Trehgram, which was till recently an important pilgrim centre for all those intending to proceed to Shardhaji.

Trehgram is a town nestled in a forest sprawling over a hill. There is a large and beautiful spring which supplies the life-blood to a number of villages around. Being in control of the nerve-centre of several routes leading out of the fertile valley of Kashmir through tribe infested hills to Poonch, Muzafarabad and Hazara-Rawalpindi, or the more distant Kagan. Chilas, Gilgit, Kashgar and China, Trehgam was and still is an important town. As in all towns of this type, Trehgam harboured many foreign elements in its population—travellers, adventurists and shady characters who frequently upset the peace in the valley.

For reasons best known to him Lalitaditya seems to have decided to go back upon the assurance and solemn promise given to his host. Such a conduct, says Kalhana, is worthy only of an ordinary king and he attributes it to the influence of time on the mind of the ruler of Kashmir. Without mincing words he says that Lalitaditya had the royal pilgrim murdered with the help of desperadoes at Trigrami.*

* Some scholars identify Trigrami with the village of Trigam, a short distance from the ruins of the Parihasapura temples.

But the matter did not rest there. It was a foul and treacherous murder and in the course of time the news reached Gauda. One can well imagine the sorrow in the hearts of the people of Gauda, their feeling of revulsion for the king and the people of Kashmir, and the urge in them for retribution. Bengal is even today a long, long way off Kashmir, but so strong was the provocation against Lalitaditya in the minds of the friends of the deceased king that many spirited people actually set out to slake their thirst for vengeance with the blood of the treacherous ruler.

They entered Kashmir through recognised passes and to avoid suspicion declared themselves to be pilgrims on the way to Shardhaji. Gradually they trickled to Parihasapura. the capital of Lalitaditya. Unfortunately for them, however, the king had left the valley in this interval and it was for the moment beyond them to harm him. In the alternative they decided to wreak their vengeance on the deity of the treacherous king whom he had offered as his surety and thus managed to deceive his erstwhile guest.

They surrounded the temple of Parihasakesava. Before any mischief could be done the priests became suspicious and closed the gates on them*. These was an alarm and in the absence of the king messangers were rushed to the ministers. Troops were called to deal with the dark intruders. But the suicide squad burning with holy anger could not be restrained till then. They entered the adjacent temple of Ramasvamin, a structure of stone by the side of a Shiva shrine, pulled down the silver statue mistaking it for that of Parihasakesava and pulverised it to atoms. The troops had reached the spot by this time and they engaged their guests in no uncertain

* The ancient temples of Kashmir were massive structures of stone built usually in the form of a quadrangle with lofty walls. On several occasions armies took refuge in such temples as at Vijesvara and Avantipora, against stronger enemies. It is, therefore, understandable that the zealots of Gauda could not force open the gates of the temple of Parihasakesava or scale its walls.

manner. Saturated with devotion to their dead master and determined themselves to avenge the insult, the band of young men from Gauda were not deterred from their task even while suffering under the blows of their adversaries They attended to it though they were bleeding and the earth was turned hideous like the shambles. They gave their lives one after another but showed not the least sign of fear and left not a trace of the statue of Ramasvamin. In the words of the historian "Even for Fate it was not possible to achieve what the people of Gauda did at that time." He is all praise for their daring and devotion. "Even at the present time", he says, "the temple of Ramasvamin may be seen empty, on the other hand the cosmic universe is filled with the fame of the brave men of Gauda."

The End of Lalitaditya

WHILE giving an account of the reign of Lalitaditya, Kalhana makes what can be regarded only as a passing reference to his demise. Lalitaditya started on a mighty expedition in the north after having occupied the throne for thirtysix years, and all that his people learnt about him afterwards was the message known as 'Lalitaditya's testament'. Kalhana hints at several versions about his death. One of these is that he entered the flames during some crisis to safeguard his own prestige.

Kalhana was a contemporary of Harshadeva, (1089—1101, A. D.) and has recorded the events of his life in minute detail. Towards the end of his life Harsha had to face a revolt from his own cousins and being unable to cope with the situation he took counsel with his ministers so as to follow a course befitting a king. It is in this context that Kalhana gives a detailed account of the death of Lalitaditya put in the mouth of Harsha.

In the region of the north while Lalitaditya was proceeding unhampered, a loophole in his plan was noticed by the enemy who employed his strategy so as to disperse the grand army in various passes, and the invader himself was left with only a few soldiers in a pass. The enemy then blocked the pass and Lalitaditya, left without his army and the supplies, was trapped and his adversary, Salya, alongwith the hordes of his cavalry took a vow to take him alive as a captive. Lalitaditya who had never faced a situation as unfavourable and grim as the present one, pondered over how he could seek his escape. No solution presented itself to him, nor did he deem it proper to open negotiations. Feeling absolutely depressed he asked

the most trusted of his ministers, Bhavasvamin, to advise him as to how he should tackle the situation.

Like many other ministers of the age Bhavasvamin was a warrior-statesman who alongwith his master had returned home crowned with glory from dozens of battle-fields. But he had the rare quality of devotion to his master to the point of self-extinction. Having applied his mind to the situation he realised that the king, already past the best in his glorious career, was on the brink of misfortune. After raising the edifice of his renown through a life-time of effort the king could demolish it by one last act. Bhavasvamin came to the conclusion that nothing could retrieve the military situation for the king, but that all efforts should be made to save his illustrious name from being stained. Barring a favourable military decision which was impossible the other ways out of the predicament comprised unconditional surrender to Salya leading to imprisonment, and suicide. Both these courses were out of the question. Continued fighting with only a handful of followers against the enemy who far outnumbered him meant certain capture as vowed by Salya who would see to it that Lalitaditya got no chance to die a hero's death fighting. Suicide under the circumstances contravened the code of chivalry and honour. Both the minister and the king felt that the act of self-slaughter would tempt the posterity to blacken his name. Yet the minister decided upon the king seeking voluntary death to his imprisonment. He formed a plan to take the stain of suicide out of the voluntary death that the king would have to seek. "The job of the statesman is to conserve renown ; deeds which aim at the enlargement of territory trail far behind it," thought the minister. He advised the king to practise a ruse : he was immediately to proclaim that he had suffered a sudden attack of a disease called *dandaklaska*, a kind of colic. The next step, the minister said, would follow the next day.

The king feigned an attack of the disease as advised and was seen rolling on the ground with 'unbearable pain'. In the 'paroxysms' he groaned and tore his hair. His people tried various

remedies which included sweating, massage and vomitting, but nothing brought about an abatement of the malady and it came to be whispered that the king was passing through the last hours of his life. Without telling the king anything Bhavasvamin, on account of his devotion to his liege being unable to stand his death, ascended the pyre and ended his life in flames. Lalitaditya learnt about it, caught the hint thrown by his minister at such high cost to his person and inwardly felt deep appreciation for it. He declared that he could not bear the intense suffering on account of his malady and consigned his body to the flames. Thus did the minister save the reputation of his master at the cost of his own life.

Adventure and Romance

THE Great Lalitaditya Muktapida was lost in the course of one of his expeditions in the north. He had two sons by his queens Kamala and Chakaramardhika, but neither of them quite answered his expectations. The king's heart was, on the other hand, set on the youngest of his grandsons Jayapida, and he advised his courtiers to instruct the lad thus: "May you be like the grandfather."

Lalitaditya was succeeded by his eldest son accordring to the king's testament. In the course of a few years two or three successive occupants of the throne died and Jayapida was invested with the sceptre and crown. He had immense self-confidence and the instructions of his grandfather deeply impressed him. Without wasting much time attending to the affairs of the state, he entrusted the administration to his brother-in-law Jijja and he himself set out towards the plains of India in search of adventure.

During his wanderings he reached the city of Paundravardhana in the kingdom of Gauda in Bengal. An earlier king of Gauda had been got murdered in Trehgam in Kashmir by Lalitaditya and it was indiscreet or overbold on the part of the exuberant grandson to invite danger in that very kingdom. All the same, he moved about in disguise without any protection or helper except his own wit and valour. Nobody, however, knew of his arrival. He visited the temple of Kartikeya where a dancer displayed her talent in Bharatnatyam to propitiate the deity in accordance with the age-old custom. She was enthralled by his appearance and felt that he could not be a commoner. She also noted that he touched his shoulder with his hand repeatedly even as a cow blows away a fly with her tail.

The dancer inferred that this was because of the habit of receiving a betel from behind as was customary with princes. She asked somebody to offer the stranger a betel from behind which done confirmed her surmise.

He was persuaded to go to the house of Kamla, the dancer, who received him with exceeding hospitality The king accepted her hospitality, but when she presented her person to him as a token of her love he recited a verse which means "What does a man of determination whose ambition for conquest is not satisfied care about women. Until he has overrun the entire world the sun does not make love to Sandhya, the lady of the Twilight". Thus it dawned upon Kamla that the hero who had enthralled her heart was some great man indeed.

Jayapida stayed at the house of Kamla for a few days. In the course of his stay he learnt that the city had been terror-stricken by a fierce man-eater who had taken a heavy toll of men and animals. Even such a beast as the elephant was absolutely at the mercy of the lion. Jayanta, the chief of the principality, had made many efforts to trap the animal or to have it killed, but all to no purpose. Even well-known warriors and princes threw up their hands in despair : they had never known a beast as strong and ferocious. Reports of the depredations of the beast were submitted to Jayanta every day and he felt sad that he was not able to grant protection to the subjects against this menace.

When Jayapida heard of the panic created by the beast he stole away the next evening from Kamla's house to encounter it. Taking cover behind a tree till the beast appeared he made a dash towards the lion and succeeded in killing it. His own forearm was injured in the encounter.

The joyful tidings of the death of the man-eater spread next morning like wild-fire. It was welcome to every citizen but most of all to Jayanta, the ruler of the domain. He felt that at last somebody had done what it was his duty to accomplish. In his excitement he decided to satisfy himself that the

lion was really dead and proceeded to the spot. He was surprised at the prowess of the hero who had killed the lion with just one deep thrust of his dagger, for the body of the man-eater bore no other mark. When the corpse was examined minutely and turned about, a golden armlet was found in its mouth. Engraved on the golden ornament were the words 'His Majesty King Jayapida."

Who had killed the tiger was now clear to Jayanta. He had obviously done it by thrusting his elbow into the mouth and throat of the beast and then probed into his heart with his dagger. He was amazed to learn that the king had come all the distance from Kashmir without his being aware of it. Jayanta did not look to what had happened to one of the Guada princes in Kashmir, nor did he suspect the motives of Jayapida. On the other hand he decided to accord welcome to the hero publicly and reprimanded his nobles thus: "At a time of rejoicing why do you, O fools, let fear shake your hearts?"

Soon after this the messengers brought reports to the king that Jayapida was staying at the house of Kamla. Jayanta proceeded there along with the royal ladies and his courtiers. Jayapida was persuaded to accept the hospitality of Jayanta. The latter had no son and only one daughter whom he offered to the king of Kashmir. On his part Jayapida overcame several princes and made his father-in-law their overlord. He made further conquests before he reached his capital with Kalyanidevi, the daughter of Jayanta of Gauda, and Kamla, the former dancer. His wife's brother, Jijja, whom he had left in charge of the administration resisted his entry and Jayapida had to wrest his throne. A battle took place at the village of Suskaletra, modern Hokhalitr. The villagers and woodsmen rallied round Jayapida but nothing decisive happened. At last a *candala* named Srideva hit Jijja with a stone shot from a sling as the latter was taking water from a golden vessel. Jijja was killed and Jayapida occupied his throne.

A King Breaks his Word

JAYAPIDA'S attention was once drawn by a petitioner, an old man, who sought his protection against a powerful and inexorable enemy. "Sire," said the petitioner, "if you grant me the protection I implore, I shall endeavour to render service as no one else can." The king asked him what anxiety was eating his heart and the old man began his tale of woe.

He told the king that he was none other than the Mahapadam Nag. Though a serpent living under water he was able to assume any form at will. He lived with his family under water in the Mahapadamsar which is at present known as the Wular Lake. The king of the serpents dreaded a sorcerer who had threatened to dry up the lake. The sorcerer had come from the far-off Marwar, a region notorious for its waterless tracts and sands. His mission was to dry up the mighty lake with the black art, capture the serpent king and carry it off to the dry wastes of Marwar in the hope that the parched land over there would quicken with water that the Nag was bound to draw for himself from the unknown depths of the earth. The serpent told the king that he lived in the lake with his mates and offspring and that he shuddered at the very thought of an outsider intruding upon the privacy of his domestic life even as a human being would. Being caught in the muddy bottom of the lake would put him to dishonour and humiliation and he had rather lose his life than suffer helplessly his mates being subjected to disrespect or insults. In return he promised the king that he would disclose to him a gold mine that would enrich the king and his offspring for centuries.

The idea of the Nag suffering disrespect and humiliation at the hands of the sorcerer moved the king because it was a basic

reaction to the situation, particularly for the head of a family who was anxious to maintain the honour and dignity of those under his care. The king and the Nag were both sovereigns and an inherent sympathy existed between them Apart from that, however, the lure of a gold mine was placed before the king who needed money for his wars and his buildings. He gave the Nag the word that he would help him against the sorcerer.

The next day the king had the sorcerer called to his presence and put him questions. The latter corroborated the main facts as narrated by the Nag. With his mouth agape the king gazed at the mysterious sorcerer. "And do you have the skill to drain the entire lake ?" asked the king. "By your leave, Your Majesty, I can do so," replied the other. His mind swelled with amazement and he thought that though a king he was no match for the master of the black art. He forgot the promise he had given to the Nag ; he forgot the gold mine ; and he did not remember that he had been touched by the fear of indignity and humiliation expressed by the Nag when he had assumed the human form. What aroused his curiosity was to see the sorcerer demonstrate his art practically. He asked the latter to give him a demonstration and the sorcerer did so.

He took the king to the lake and started his exercise in sorcery. Gradually the level in the lake fell till there was practically no water left. The king saw beautiful young serpents squirming on the oozy bottom of the lake. and then were visible the Mahapadam Nag and his serpent-wives trying to burrow deeper into the mud. They seemed to be in great distress as they had been exposed. At this stage the king remembered the promise he had given to the Nag and ordered the sorcerer to stop. The charm broke, the lake was once again filled with water and the serpent brood took shelter behind their privacy. The sorcerer was bundled off to the land he had come from.

That night the king had a dream and he demanded of the Nag the fulfilment of the promise to show him a gold mine. The Mahapadam Nag accused him of breaking the promise he had solemnly given and of putting him to great distress which was unbecoming to a king. The serpent, however, expressed his gratitude to the king for having ultimately driven away the sorcerer which had saved him from falling into his hands. He did not show him the mine of gold but gave him the clue to a copper mine. The king regretted the temptation to break his promise because it had turned his gold into copper.

Jayapida and Devasarma

ONE of the expeditions of Jayapida was planned against Aramuri, the prince of a mountain state in the Himalayas near Nepal. Aramuri was no coward and he apprised the king of Kashmir of his desire to give proper reception to anyone invading his state. So, Jayapida marched down with a huge army. Marching by day and halting by night he reached the borders of the Nepalese territory and was surprised to find no one to resist his advance into the little kingdom. Somewhat elated, he continued his advance. This was exactly as Aramuri had planned. If he did not command reputation for valour as Jayapida did, if he did not boast of such an army as the Kashmirian king, he did not very much worry about it. He meant to make use of the vast war material with which his hilly country was lavishly endowed and to utilize rock and boulder, hill and ravine, forest and stream to resist the advance of the enemy and to break his strength. When he heard of the arrival of Jayapida with his host, he retired into the interior and thus created an impression of his apparent weakness.

Jayapida could not resist the temptation and followed in the wake of the retreating enemy. Aramuri was clever enough not to give Jayapida a chance to encounter him. Unhindered advance made the invader somewhat complacent and put him off his guard; yet the Nepal king never approached him and the adventurer was more and more convinced of his ultimate victory. But at last Jayapida came to a hurdle in the form of a river and his rapid advance was checked. He camped by the bank of the river awaiting his chance to ford it. Because of his there-to-fore uninterrupted advance he was still flushed with vanity and forsook the exercise of vigilance and precaution.

Having been unable to ford the river so far he travelled along its bank with a view to doing so. While thus on the march he got sight of the Napalese army across the river.

He was so hungry for a glimpse of the enemy that when he caught sight of Aramuri's army he felt like a cat kept away from its prey. Was it not his ambition to finish the Nepalese army? Had he not come all the way from Kashmir to tame his enemy and clip his claws ? How could he brook this river to baulk him thus ? Cross it he must So he sent parties to locate where they could ford the river and grapple with the enemy.

They were not long in reporting. They had discovered a place where the river was only knee-deep Taking advantage of this Jayapida led his army into the water expecting that within a short time they would hurl themselves against the Nepalese. But fate ordained otherwise. While the invading army was in midstream, a flood surged down and confronted them almost before they were aware of it. They were veterans, most of them, and would have shown their mettle against any human foe. But here nature had made an onslaught. The charger and the elephant, the chariot and the warrior, all of them were carried away by the spate. Those few who strove for their lives could be counted on the finger tips and Jayapida was among them. Before he could pull himself ashore another foe much more relentless than the flood confronted him. Nepalese warriors appeared on the scene floating on water-skins and captured him when there was not a soul by his side to offer resistance to the enemy.

The tables were thus completely turned on the king. It now dawned upon him that he had not displayed sufficient foresight in planning and executing the invasion and he realized that the scarcity of water in the river and the subsequent innundation were pre-planned by the enemy with the help of a diversion channel. But being wise after the event was of little avail to him in his present calamity. Everything is fair in war and Aramuri would be well within his rights if he had

killed him. He, however, preffered to subject his captive to a more humiliating punishment. Jayapida was confined to a castle on a lofty mountain spur washed by the Kalgandika and a guard was set on him. He was thus completely cut off from aid reaching him from any quarter. The sentinels were so strict that they would not permit the captive even to see the sun or the moon. Even if they had been kinder, Jayapida had to negotiate the precipitous spur and cross the mighty Kalgandika before he could consider himself out of the enemy's reach. The adverse situation was so unfavourable to the captive king that he gave up all hope. Greater than the loss of his kingdom to him was the blow given to his vanity. He felt crushed like a lion overcome by a mere hound. Disgrace had crowned his head and there was little possibility of his retrieving his honour. Consequently he burnt with rage and was consumed with humiliation.

The unenviable predicament in which Jayapida found himself pulled him to the depths of despair as much as he had mounted the pinnacle of excited complacency Living was a misery and he wished death would relieve him of his grief and humiliation. Alternatively he had a vague feeling that he might yet be rescued out of the prison as he had previously managed to escape with the help of such a flimsy thing as *vajravrakhsha*. But the chances this time were very remote and he was convinced that his predicament was the beginning of his end. Though Jayapida had obviously lost all hope in his extremely difficult situation, nature was unwilling to let him rot there.

Jayapida was especially fortunate in having a wise, brave and devoted minister who controlled the affairs of the state very ably in the absence of his master abroad. Devasarma's father Mitrasarma had been the trusted minister of the great Lalitaditya and in the service of his master Devasarma followed the footsteps of his own renowned father. He lived in an age when relations of kings, ministers or feudal lords would snatch every opportunity to seize the kingdom, and another man

would have welcomed the captivity of Jayapida and ascended the throne himself. Far from that, Devasarma was planning how to rescue the king out of the prison, and to rescue him even at the cost of his own life.

Everything is fair in war and Devasarma tried his own weapons. He wrote a flattering letter to Aramuri, expressing his great pleasure at the disaster that had befallen the Kashmiri army and jubilating at the captivity of Jayapida. He offered to establish the sway of Aramuri in Kashmir and to give him the whole wealth of the kingdom. Many a minister of the time actually did what Devasarma offered to do and Aramuri was taken in by the sweet-worded letter of the minister. The Nepalese king called him to his presence. This was exactly as Devasarma had planned and he left for Nepal with a Kashmir army in considerable strength. On reaching the kingdom of Aramuri Devasarma went to the capital with but a few men, leaving his soldiers disguised as peasants and pilgrims, near the banks of the Kalgandika.

When Devasarma's arrival was announced to the king, he felt highly pleased and accorded him a warm welcome. He had overcome the king of Kashmir but, Kashmir being far away, it brought little gain to him except that his vanity was satisfied. Through the intervention of Devasarma he now hoped to secure the wealth and the kingdom of Kashmir, which his armed might had failed to get him. What could give him greater pleasure? On the first day the king received him in his court and after the preliminary and formal reception dismissed him as he was feeling weary. The discussion of the main business was therefore postponed.

The next day Aramuri and his guest retired to a private apartment to settle their affairs. Devasarma told the king that Jayapida had an immense treasure hidden somewhere and that the secret was known only to Jayapida himself and to the army. He gave the king to understand that it was impossible to get the secret of the treasure from the army officers to whom

Jayapida had entrusted it. The only other course left open for them was to induce Jayapida himself to reveal the secret.

Devasarma sought Aramuri's permission to see Jayapida in his confinement and to make an offer of his release to him on the condition that he revealed where his treasure was hidden. Aramuri readily agreed. The minister had won the confidence of the Nepalese king to such an extent that he was permitted to visit his master alone The next day he went to the castle on the bluff of the rock to pay his respects to his master Jayapida. This meeting under strange circumstances brought tears to the eyes of both. The king recalled his glory and grieved that he had fallen not in the field of battle but because of a trick unexpected by him. The minister was sad too, for he found his sovereign in a miserable plight, sad, dejected and demoralised, languishing further and further into despair everyday. For long he had been awaiting this opportunity and now he felt there could be no more hindrances in the way of his master gaining liberty unless he himself created some, for the sudden and unexpected reverse in his fortune had rudely shaken Jayapida.

The first task of Devasarma was, therefore, to restore courage and confidence to Jayapida, for unless the captive chief rose fully to the occasion, no one could possibly help him. Devasarma assured his master that there was a good chance for him to effect his escape from the prison. Jayapida considered it almost an impossibility and expressed his scepticism. The minister reiterated his assurance saying, "You may succeed if your courage fails thee not." Jayapida could not conjure up the possibility of overpowering his guards and expressed his doubt. "I am all alone and entirely unarmed. How can I break through the iron ring of armed guards?" "The Maharaja need not worry himself on that account, for if his spirit be not lost, he can jump into the river and cross to safety," replied the minister. He told Jayapida that if he could do this much, he would find his army awaiting his commands just across the river which rendered this castle impregnable. Jayapida felt

allured by the prospect of meeting his troops just across the river and his drooping spirits buoyed up. For a moment he let his fancy roam: he would meet his army, reorganize it, profit by his previous mistake and sweep upon Aramuri's kingdom in a new invasion. Only such a development would slake the vegeance burning in his heart ; only thus would he retrieve his pride, re-establish his prestige, regain his honour and face the world again.

There, however, was a big leeway to be covered : how to cross the river ? So he posed this question to his trusted councillor : "But how can I cross the river, for I have no leather bag with which I could trust myself ?" Devasarma promised to supply him one. Jayapida who was thinking in terms of retrieving his pride and wreaking vengeance expressed his doubt if the leather bag would be strong enough. "A weak one will burst and I shall he recaptured. In that case my humiliation will be intolerable," he added. Devasarma once again stirred his spirit and assured him of a strong leather bag. Jayapida felt that all that he needed was a leather bag and his dreams would be completed. "When would it be possible for you to smuggle through your bag ?" asked the captive. "Wait for two *dhandas*," replied the minister advising the king to go to a different apartment during the interval.

Jayapida was still under the impression that his former minister Devasarma would be able to smuggle in a leather bag by bribing the guards He was therefore grateful to him and thought of recompensing him fully when he got back to his capital He quietly waited for two *dhandas* and when he re-entered the apartment he was met with a most unexpected sight. He rubbed his eyes before he could believe them. Davasarma, his minister, who had come all along from Kashmir to redeem his master from the captivity of the Nepalese prince had killed himself with a piece of cloth tied round his neck. It was most shocking that the minister who had been planning the release of his master should have committed suicide at the moment when his help was needed most. Jayapida was astounded and disap-

pointed. But before he could audibly give expression to his feelings his attention was drawn to a few blood marks on the garment of the deceased. There, written in blood was the key to the whole riddle. The writing ran, "I am dead today. My body is stuffed with air and will make an excellent leather bag for your use. For your convenience I have tied a cloth round my thighs. This will enable you to thrust in your legs and prevent the bag slipping away I shall feel fully compensated for this act of love if you successfully make good your escape".

Jayapida was deeply touched by this act of sacrifice on the part of his minister who had risen to greater heights than even his own father Mitrasarma, the minister of Lalitaditya Muktapida. He never expected that anybody would go so far in his act of devotion. Had he known the plan of action before the irrevocable step had been taken, he might not have agreed to the execution of this plot fatal to Devasarma whose support and advice he valued above everything. Now that the minister had already sacrificed his life for a noble object in the service of his master, it became all the more important for Jayapida to play his part cautiously and carefully so that the self immolation of Devasarma should not be in vain.

Assuring himself that the guards were off the scent he made use of the body in plunging into the river and, before the authorities were even fully aware of what had happened, he managed to gain the other bank of the river. His army which was concealed in the forests rushed to greet him as soon as they came to know of his arrival. Already remorseful for the misfortune their king had suffered, these soldiers were greatly inspired to fight valiantly when they saw Jayapida's 'water bag', and learnt of the heroic sacrifice Davasarma had made for his master. Jayapida was panting for revenge ; he invaded the kingdom of Aramuri and destroyed his power.

Jayapida Persecutes Brahmins

THE reign of Jayapida (A. D. 746-81) was eventful to the highest degree. He led many expeditions in pursuit of adventure and conquest, and vastly added to his reputation as a conquerer. He founded new cities, built palaces and temples, dug canals and set up a strong administration. Truly had his grandfather predicted a great future for him. The king respected Brahmins and men of learning who adorned his court like a galaxy. In fact some of them came from distant places to enjoy the bliss of his patronage.

Towards the close of his reign, however, the king did all he could to tease and harass his Brahmin subjects. He imposed heavy taxes on them and hated them. What was responsible for this sudden change in the policy of the king ?

On his return from one of his expeditions Jayapida did not find his favourite queen who was a paragon of beauty. He was told that the queen had died a sudden death. The king was stricken with grief but being helpless sought diversion in the affairs of state. It was his practice to leave the palace in disguise and see for himself how the people fared under his rule. One night, while he was on one such round, he observed a concourse of people standing in front of a goldsmith's shop listening to a tale, told in doggerel verse in the vulgar tongue, about the love of a Brahmin youth with the queen who was dead. The people laughed and whistled and clapped their hands as the tale of love was unravelled. The king joined the bystanders and learnt all the details of the unfortunate death of his queen.

He learnt that on one occasion while the queen was on a visit to a temple her beauty and grace deeply wounded the

heart of a young Brahmin. This silly lad grew so infatuated that he began to languish and the physicians lost all hope of his living unless his craving was satisfied ; and yet how could that be? One day the mother of the lad entreated the queen for a boon to save her only son from certain death. When the queen expressed willingness to save the lad for the sake of his afflicted mother, the latter told her what the lad was sick of and what could cure him. The queen was astounded but could do nothing as she had rashly given her word to a distressed Brahmin woman. She sought the advice of her preceptor if anything could expiate a grave sin incurred in saving a man from certain death and was told that distribution of largess was the remedy. The queen sent word to the Brahmin lady and the lad was one night admitted to her chamber secretly. He was beside himself with joy on the attainment of the well-nigh impossible object on which he had set his silly heart.

The next morning the queen took the preceptor into confidence and confessed her sin. He shook his head gravely and declared that earlier she had not even remotely hinted at infidelity which was so great a sin that expiation could be made for it only if the queen immolated herself on a burning pyre. The queen did so. The narrator of the tale invested the narration with a satire and humour which cut the king to the quick.

Jayapida returned to his palace. The next morning he sent for the narrator of the tale, the goldsmith and the others, and had all the details corroborated. The Brahmin lad, the preceptor and many other Brahmins including courtiers, noblemen, officials, astrologers, and scholars were put to the sword. He had their books and manuscripts consigned to the waves. Officials were encouraged to devise new ways of persecuting Brahmins and, in fact, of exterminating them. He imposed fines on his subjects and Shibdasa, the head of the finance department, endeared himself to the king by devising new taxes on the subjects. This vindictiveness grew on what it fed on. For three years the officials seized the harvest together with the cultivators' share. Thousands were deprived of life, for

the king called for a report if on any day less than a hundred Brahmins were put to death.

On their own part the Brahmins faced the persecution with exemplary conduct. Many of them died and some fled the country, but tyranny emboldened the others to put up resistance. The gifted poets amongst them reversed their eulogies and wrote satires. One day while he was encamped on the bank of the Chandrabhaga (i. e., the Sindh) he ordered the resumption of the lands attached to the sacred shrine of Tulamula. Ninety nine Brahmins were also drowned in the river nearby but that did not satiate the vindictive frenzy of the king. Soon after the Brahmins from the village of Tulamula approached him to protest against the king's chamberlain who had insultingly struck them in accordance with the instructions of the king.

"Sire !" they added, "Brahmins have not experienced insults to their honour even from such exalted beings as Manu, Mandhatr and Rama of the illustrious Raghu clan. To insult a Brahmin is to play with fire, for when inflamed with anger he is able to burn down in a moment the paradise with Indra". In his arrogance the king pooh-poohed the Brahmins saying, "How impudent on the part of the beggars living on almsgrain to talk so big as if you were *rishis* !"

The leader of the Brahmins was one Ittila who made bold to say, "In the age which tolerates you as a ruler why are we not *rishis*."

The king laughed hilariously, "Ha, ! ha ! are you then Visvamitra, Vasistha or perchance Agastya ?" Ittila was stung with the sarcastic hilarity of the king and overcome with anger hit back, "If you are Harischandra, Trishanku or perchance a Nahusa, then I am Visvamitra indeed".

The king was unmoved by all this rhetorical repartee and was by no means in a mood to have any sympathy with the tyrannised Brahmins. He addressed the victims in his arrogant, sarcastic hauteur, "If it is so," he said, "wherefore this in-

ordinate delay ? Let the punishment the Brahmins desire to inflict fall immediately." "There it falls, you miscreant," rejoined Ittila, stamping his foot significantly.

The moment he uttered this curse, one of the golden poles supporting the canopy which stretched over them slipped and hit the vain king. He fell into a swoon. When he came to he saw a deep wound on his body caused by the pole. The wound would not heal for all the treatment it received. It turned into a running sore and nursed worms which had to be removed with pincers.

Jayapida saw the lowest depth of pain, misery and helples . ness till in the fullness of time death came to his rescue. According to Birbal Kachru's unpublisheld *Twarikhi Kashmir* prolonged agony at last humbled the king's arrogance. He sent for the aggrieved Brahmin Ittila and appealed to his mercy in ali humility for instantaneous death or relief. He took an oath that he would not be the cause of trouble to anyone else. Ittila took pity on him. Burning his grass sandal he put a little of the ash on the sore and prayed to God for the king in agony. The sore was cured. The king sent his servants round to Brahmins requesting forgiveness. Itilla was installed in the royal palace with honour and Jayapida kept the promise not to trouble Brahmins.

An Engineer is Discovered

THE dynasty of the illustrious Lalitaditya, descendants of the divorced wife of the merchant of Rohtak, failed in the course of time to produce a ruler strong enough to hold the land together. The feudal lords raised their head and at last in A. D. 855 Suravarman, the prime minister, placed on the throne a young man named Avantivarman. Avantivarman did not belong to the royal family. His grandfather Utpala had gained favour at the court through his sister Jayadevi, a courtesan married to Lalitapida, Jayapida's son, and his great grandfather had been a spirit-distiller ; but the minister found some promise in Avantivarman and exalted him to kingship.

Avantivarman was a good and strong ruler. He suppressed rebels and anti-social elements, and respected scholars and learned men. Kallata Bhata, the well-known exponent of Shaivism, Ratnakar, the predecessor of Kalhana who wrote the history of Kashmir from the earliest times down to his own day, Shivaswamin, poet, Ramata, an authority on grammar, Anandvardhan, poet and rhetorician who gave us *Dhavanyaloka*, all enjoyed the patronage of the king. They proceeded to the Sabha of the king in 'vehicles (litters) worthy of kings'. He founded Avantipora and built there the temples dedicated to Avantishvara and Avantisvamin, the ruins of which are seen to this day by everyone travelling by road to Srinagar.

During his reign the country suffered a terrible visitation. One night a mighty earthquake occurred, and a hill below Baramulla crumbled into the narrow bed of the Jhelum below and blockaded the river. The people, however, came to attribute the landslide to a mighty demon and fled far away from that direction lest any evil befall them.

The real demon was, however, alive and active, working every minute to the detriment of the whole country. It was the Jhelum which finding its course impeded, turned its bed into a lake. The water rose higher and higher, the river sprang out of its bed and made inroads on the areas in its vicinity. Every hour the river extended its empire till a vast lake was formed. What were fields flourishing with paddy became a part of the bed of this vast lake or formed its backwaters. Cultivable land shrank and the produce dwindled. Famine began to stalk the country and a *kharwar* of paddy was sold for 1050 *dinnars*. People began to die of starvation

The king was greatly distressed. He wanted to do something for the people but did not know what would save the situation. Everybody dreaded the 'demon inside the river who had caused the blockade' and none was prepared to risk 'certain death' by approaching the site How could the king save his people ?

At last he received tidings that a certain wise man named Suyya was willing to place his services at the disposal of the king to fight the famine caused by the accumulation of water. It came to the king like a ray of light in a dark dense forest and he wanted to meet the man and discuss the problem with him. His courtiers advised him against it, for Suyya was known as a *chandala* and what would anyone expect of one belonging to that caste ? Suyya was actually a foundling picked and brought up by a *chandala* woman. She had very much been struck by the appearance of the infant whom she found sucking his thumb when she first saw it. He grew up to be precocious, surprised every one with his intelligence and came to be called after his mother.

In spite of his ministers, however, the king sought the help of Suyya and accepted both his conditions, viz., gave him pot-fulls of gold coins and allowed him a free hand.

Of course, Suyya did not share with the ignorant the belief in the existence of the demon and his first aim was to drive

away the water-wraith from its abode in the hearts of the people. He got it proclaimed that he was going to drop pot-fulls of gold coins into the river and anybody who recovered a coin could keep it. The courtiers at once reported the matter to the king pointing out how the *chandala* was out to waste the precious metal when the state was already impoverished on account of the scarcity of food. But the king had confidence in the ability of Suyya and he paid no heed to this complaint.

On the appointed day Suyya found that hundreds of people had come from far and near to see him drop the gold coins into the river. This place near Khadanyar was called Yakodar or the cleft of the demon. It was a spur projecting into the river-bed nearly three miles below the Baramulla gorge. Rocks and boulders rolled down the hill and obstructed the river. He placed himself in a boat which was punted to a place near the blockade and, repeating his promise that whoever got a coin from under water could keep it, he emptied the contents of a pot into the river. Some people were amazed at the futility of his efforts, others thought that he was mad while many more wished he had given them the gold instead of dropping it into water. Such people had grown sick of life on account of the scarcity of food and the exorbitant prices they were called upon to pay. Finding bright gold coins disappearing in the river the people were filled with a craving for them. Some of them thought of plunging into water to reach out for them irrespective of what might befall. A few of the bolder spirits actually dived into the river after the coins, demon or no demon. The bystanders watched their fate with bated breath. They expected the divers to form a delicious morsel for the demon but no such activity appeared anywhere. The people were astounded when the divers returned to the surface, each of them with bright coins. In doing so they threw up stones, mud and sand and the bed of the river was deepened. The spot came to be known as Dyaragol or the entrance of wealth.

This was the first indication of the success of the plan of Suyya. He had more gold coins dropped into the river with the result that people literally left no stone unturned in recovering them from beneath the water. Having thus exorcised the hobgoblin of fear from the hearts of the people, Suyya was sure to enlist their participation in the task of clearing the obstruction in the course of the river. That was accomplished without any hindrance. A stone dam was built above Dyaragol and the dried-up bed below cleared of all obstruction and deepened for seven days. The dam was then removed. The channel of the Jhelum being thus clear, water was drained out and the artificial lake from Bejbehara to Baramulla disappeared in a few days. He had dropped a potful of money in an unfathomable depth of water at Nandaka near Bijbehara and recovered it from dry land when the village of the same name emerged from the flood. The adjoining land was reclaimed and the alluvial soil raised a bumper harvest. Embankments granted further protection to cultivable land. He caused the Sindh to meet the Jhelum at Shardapur, modern Shadipur, and raised training embankments for it for seven *yojanas* till it fell into the Wular and thence to Baramulla till it entered the adamantine mountain walls. The price of rice fell to thirtysix dinnaras.

Suyya was able to reclaim from under water a vast area in the vicinity of the Wular. Because of the fertility of the soil it attracted many a settler and grew into a populous village. It came to be called Suyyapur after the illustrious engineer and has been shortened into Sopore. Thus did his countrymen express their appreciation of the efforts made for their well-being by Suyya, the son of a sweeper woman.

The Death of Shankarvarman

JAHANGIR. the great Mughal, was very fond of Kashmir and visited the valley as many as eight times during his comparatively short reign lasting twenty two years. He actually died in Kashmir at Verinag. The news of his death was kept a confidential secret for reasons of state and, under the orders of Noor Jahan, the dead body was invested in all the royal accoutrements and carried south in camouflage as if the king himself enjoyed health and authority. The royal cavalcade of elephants and palanquins, ponies and mules, footmen and porters made its way along the Mughal road in the western mountainous ramparts of the valley. By the time Chingas on the southern slope of the Peer-Panchal was reached, the lifeless-body showed the effect of time. According to some authorties it was decided to relieve it of the tissues which are more susceptible to decomposition. The emperor's body was, therefore, subjected to the surgeon's knife and the decayed tissues were buried at Chingas. All this was done in secret and the secrecy was maintained till the party reached the Punjab. By this time the emperor's death could no longer be kept veiled and the remains of Jahangir were finally buried in Lahore.

Nearly 700 years before Jahangir, Kashmir was ruled by a king named Shankervarman (A. D. 883-902). He was quite a conrast to his father Avantivarman whose name is associated with the town and the temples of Avantipora. Shanker proved to be a thoroughly bad king, spent all his time in military engagements or venal activities and did little for the welfare of his subjects. His companions were vile, and his advisers unscruplous. The king adopted every means to despoil the land of its riches.

He robbed the city of Lalitaditya at Parihasapura of all its riches and employed them to build temples in the town founded by him, viz., Shankarpattan. He resumed the lands granted to temples. He took from the shrines the sale proceeds of incense, sandal, oil and the like, and plundered no less than sixty - four temples. He practised fraud on his subjects by reducing the weights in the scales by a third and ostentatiously increased the annual grants to priests and others. He thus resorted to the trick of inflation. He also imposed on the villagers the system of the carriage of loads known in the vernacular as *begar*. The people were so disgusted with him that after his death his name was dropped from the name of the town founded by him. People who live in Pattan, seventeen miles from Srinagar on the way to Baramulla, have no idea that it was originally known as Shankar-Pattan. "In the case of who else", says the historian, "has the name disappeared as in that of Shankarvarman".

The king showed considerable aptitude as a fighter and in his younger days he reduced to subjection many rulers all round his frontiers. Towards the end of his life he was provoked to lead a punitive-cum-aggressive march. The commander of his frontier guards was killed at *Viranaka at the entrance to his territory. The king was infuriated and razed Viranaka to the ground. Next he marched north to the region of the Indus to punish the tribal chieftains whom he suspected of fomenting disloyalty amongst his liegemen. The chieftains were overawed and made obeisance, and the king started on his return journey. At a place called Urusa a sudden quarrel developed between the people and his soldiers. The soldiers were no doubt flushed with the success of their expedition and the people, on the other hand, resented their intrusion. In the melee one of the inhabitants aimed an arrow from the crest of

* Viranaka is a village, opposite to Buliyasu, on the Jhelum, a short distance below Baramulla.

Urusa: practically the same as the modern district of Hazara.

the hill which pierced the neck of the king. Realising the fatal nature of the injury and the hostile environment the king directed his minister to lead the army to safety out of the narrow gorges and deep defiles. The injury cost the king his sight and he failed to see his queen Sugandha who accompanied him on the expedition. He only heard her wailing. Soon after the barb was taken out of the king's neck he breathed his last.

This was not the first time for the mountain defiles of the north to exact their heavy toll from the valley of Kashmir in the form of the life of the sovereign. Nearly two hundred years earlier the mighty Lalitaditya had been lost along with his army in the mountainous wastes of the north. On the present occasion the ministers acted wisely in order to save the army from annihilation at the hands of the sharp shooters of the hills and they kept the accident a closely-guarded secret from every one. The morale of the army was, therefore, not affected. The security of the non-combatants on the march and the country as a whole was thus assured.

Every day the ministers propagated concocted stories about the king's deeds from hour to hour which continued the illusion in the minds of the people that the king was alive.

His body was dressed up in the regal attire and a system of ropes was mechanically contrived and delicately manipulated so that movement of several limbs of the king became possible. The dead body was thus made to acknowledge the salutes and greetings of the feudatories with the movements of the head or the hands. The queen and the ministers maintained a composure and solemnity as if nothing extraordinary had taken place.

This mime was continued while the army was on its march for six days through petty states unfriendly to Kashmir. Having emerged from the hostile mountainous glens into the territory firmly under the Kashmir administration, the grief-stricken but tactful queen and the trusted ministers no longer deemed

it necessary to deny the mortal remains of the king the long deserved rest. When they reached Bolyasaka, (modern Bolyasu), the corpse was consigned to the flames. Six living persons including three queens, two servants and Jayasimha, a man of virtue, died with him on the funeral pyre.

The Brahmin's Elect a King

THE dynasty founded by Avantivarman did not produce another worthy king. The successors of the illustrious founder of the dynasty were wicked or selfish, weak or perverted. For this reason none of them could give the country a stable administration with peace and prosperity; instead, the people came to suffer a good deal. A significant development that took place in the country during these decades was that several classes, like the Tantrins and the Ekangas, grew exceedingly strong and many a king was compelled to seek their support to maintain himself on the throne against feudal barons or Damaras and tributary chiefs. These several parties were, therefore, always on the lookout for a chance to overawe the king or to win over an influential queen. They exacted bribes from kings, and revolts and counter-revolts were frequent.

The last ruler of this dynasty was one Unmatavanti. To give an example of his depravity he 'ripped open the abdomen of pregnant women in order to see the foetus'. On account of his perverted nature he has contributed a word to the Kashmiri language, viz., *vonmat*, originally *unmath*, which is used for a person of perverse predilections. Little wonder that he died of tuberculosis. Before his death he enthroned his son Suravarman who was but a child.

Suravarman was not a blue-blooded prince. He had been imported into the palace by one of the queens and foisted on the king as his own offspring. The latter did not suspect the spurious pretentions of the child, but some of the courtiers considered it an insult to offer allegiance to the would-be successor. The king was especially at enmity with the cammander-in-chief of the army, Kamalavardhana. Taking advantage of his

engagement in suppressing the Damaras in Madavarajya, the queen entrusted the protection of the boy to the Tantrins and the Ekangas who were rewarded lavishly.

The commander-in-chief was soon apprised of these developments in the capital to which he rushed post-haste from the southern district. He broke through the rings thrown round the city and the palace by the supporters of the ruling house and entered the palace to find that the boy-king and his mother had taken to their heels. Kamalavardhana was the master of the situation but failed to harvest the advantage. He did not seize the throne for himself immediately but, perhaps troubled by an uneasy conscience, wanted to seek a measure of public support and be elected king by the council of Brahmins in accordance with the practice of the day in such circumstances.

The next day he called the Brahmins to a meeting and explaining the situation called upon them to choose a new king for the country He threw a clear hint about their choice when he said, "Make some one who is grown up, capable and born in our own country the King" In his heart of hearts he had no doubt that the choice of the Brahmins would fall upon him on account of his ability no less than because the power was in his hands.

It was a simple matter so far as Kamalavardhana was concerned. All that the Brahmins had to do, he thought, was to name him with one accord and he would abide by their unanimous choice in the interests of the people. But once he had called the council of Brahmins the initiative had passed out of his hands and the Brahmins were not in a disposition to oblige the commander. Though obviously under pressure from different directions they were not to be hustled into arriving at a decision. Different proposals were made, names discussed threadbare and defeated in turn for want of sufficient support. Kamalavardhana had committed an irrevocable blunder in depending upon his own self-esteem as a sufficient motivation for the council of Brahmins to vote for his election. The delay they made in arriving at a decision filled him with

misgivings and he approached the council to nominate to the throne someone worthy of it. But owing to his failure to take a bold step earlier they continued to thwart him and moved not a little finger in furthering his interests.

Day after day the Brahmins sat in conclave. The priests came in palanquins and took their respective seats in a hall gaily bedecked with the insignia of prestige befitting such an august assembly. Day after day they assembled, discussed and dispersed. Kamalavardhana felt the ground slipping from under him with the passage of every day, even then he hesitated to resort to force or inducements. A man of the army, he staked every thing on the outcome of the constitutional procedure he had adopted voluntarily.

Five or six days passed thus and ths Brahmins were nowhere near unanimity or even a majority decision in the matter concerning the state so vitally. During this period many currents and crosscurrents were set up in the ocean that was politics in Kashmir those days. There could be no lack of ambitious people aspiring for the throne. They tried to influence the council of Brahmins. Representatives of Brahmin *parisads* (associations) and deputations from various parts of the country attended upon with drums, cymbals and music, approached the council to canvas support for different aspirants. One of them was the dowager queen of Unmattavanti She and her son, the enthroned minor of a day, had not been able to withstand the forces of Kamalavardhana. She made another attempt to regain the coveted throne with the help of what was the suicide squad of a weaponless task force, viz., hunger-strikers. In those hoary times people succeeded in obtaining justice sometimes by resorting to a hunger-strike when other methods failed. The hunger-strike was indeed a potent weapon in the hands of a Brahmin. The Brahmins of Parihasapura, a town built by Lalitaditya as his capital, were notorious in particular for pursuing this non-violent *harakiri* to a successful conclusion. The queen, therefore, sent her emissaries to Parihasapura to induce the Brahmins to help her cause by undertaking a fast unto

death before the Brahmin conclave appointed by Kamalavardhana.

While the emissaries of the queen were on their way to Parihasapura, destiny drove a man Yasaskara to cross their path. Yasaskara belonged to a family known for learning and culture. One of his ancestors had started as a tutor for the children of a minister and had risen to be the keeper of the treasury. But for all his wisdom, learning and eloquence, Yasaskara failed to create an impression in the country, and reduced to destitution he bade good-bye to the land of his birth. The star of his fortune was in the ascendent now and auspicious dreams drove him back to his village Pisacakapura in Kashmir. The emissaries of the queen met him *en route*.

They were delighted to cast their eyes on so wise and eloquent a man as Yasaskara. They instantly changed their mind, gave up the pursuit of the hunger-strikers and engaged the learned man to espouse before the council of Brahmins the cause of the former queen and her little son. Destiny made Yasaskara to accept the brief and forthwith he proceeded to the capital to assail the ears and hearts of the council with the vigour of his advocacy. But he had no time to waste his breath. No sooner did the Brahmins sitting in conclave catch sight of him than they reached unanimity in their choice and their labours were brought to a happy conclusion. Their choice fell on no one other than Yasaskara himself. They raised their voice high and the assembly hall resounded with the words, "This is the only man who should be king". The man of humble origin who had been wandering from land to land in search of food and raiment was being approached to accept the sceptre and crown. Yasaskara felt dazed as the Brahmins besprinkled him with holy water, women chanted hymns in their honeyed voices and pages held the white parasol over his head. With downcast eyes he acknowledged the benedictions of the populace as they watched his progress to the audience chamber. The saddest man that day was Kamalavardhana.

A Daniel come to Judgement

YASASKARA was elected king in 939 A.D. by the council of Brahmins called for the purpose by Kamalavardhana, the commander-in-chief who resisted the enthronement of a spurious heir. Himself a Brahmin, Yasaskara was aware of the influence that his caste could wield over him and dreaded the consequences of an unrestricted access of his fellow men to him. He begged of the Brahmins not to seek audience with him on trivial occasions. "You have conferred the crown on us ; you are to be honoured by us like the Gods. Since you will be elated with pride that you have gifted away a kingdom, you should not, except during hours of business, come near us."

On one occasion the king had finished his day's work and was about to take his meals when a petitioner arrived at his door to seek redress. Saying that the king had just concluded his day's labour, the usher would not let him in but advised him to try his luck the next morning. The petitioner, a Brahmin, expressed his determination to stake his life at the doorstep of the king for presenting his plaint. The king heard the words, halted the attendant and directed that the petitioner be asked to approach him. In the presence of the king the petitioner submitted that, having heard of the good government in his country, he had come back from wandering in other lands and had brought his savings which amounted to a hundred gold coins. The highways being free of robbers he trudged on without fear till he reached Lavanotsa* where he

* Lavanotsa is supposed to have been a village between Bijbehara and Pampore. Srinagar could be reached by a simple forced march from Lavanotsa.

made a halt. He spent the night under a tree in a garden which was not far from the road. Nearby was a well so thickly climbed over by creepers that he did not at all notice it and in his ignorance the wallet containing the gold coins and everything else fell into the well.

He was so overwhelmed with sorrow at this loss of all his belongings that he determined to conclude his lamentation with suicide. At this stage there appeared on the scene an energetic man who asked what all this lamentation was about. "If I recover the money for you." said the man after he had listened to the story, "what will you give me ?" The owner had lost practically all hope and replied, "You may give me out of that money whatever pleases you." The man wriggled through the bushes and creepers and descended into the well and returned with the wallet. He gave the Brahmin two gold coins and retained ninety-eight for himself. When the Brahmin protested everybody admonished him saying that what had happened was in accordance with the stipulation The Brahmin submitted that what he had said was no more than a polite expression which had later been used to defraud him of all the savings of his life. He pleaded for justice, adding that if he did not get what he had lost, he would as lief give up the ghost in a hunger-strike at the door-steps of the king, as die of humiliation begging his bread in the streets.

Though the Brahmin did not know his name the person who had defruaded him was soon produced before the king. He corroborated the Brahmin's story but protested that his action was not reprehensible by any means. He asserted, and herein he was supported by the courtiers and councillors, that he had not transgressed the stipulation to which the Brahmin had given his approval voluntarily. "I fail to understand wherein I have committed an offence," he submitted.

The king was placed in a fix. The man was right according to the letter of the law and nobody could find fault with him. Yet obviously there was something absurd in the stipulation

which deprived the owner of practically the whole sum. Th next morning the king announced in his court that the Brahmin was entitled to ninety-eight coins. "Though difficult to perceive," he declared, "justice remains ever close to injustice."

There was no doubt in anybody's mind that the Brahmi n deserved ninety-eight coins but none could go against the stipulation which limited the Brahmin's share subject to the pleasure of the other man. The king based his verdict on the very words of the stipulation : "Give me whatever pleases you". What pleased the man was ninety eight coins and that was exactly what the Brahmin was entitled to under the interpretation of the king. Everybody was amazed at the ingenuity of the king and the Brahmin went away repeating benedictions.

On another occasion the king was faced with a graver problem when a person determined to end his life at his doorstep was presented to him. The man submitted that though originally a well-to-do person he had, by a turn of the wheel of fortune, been brought down to the lowest ebb. He had incurred heavy debts and the creditors pestered him a good deal. To escape their frequent demands he had sold his house to a wealthy merchant but had kept the well with the steps leading to it in the hope that it would enable his wife to maintain herself by charging rent from gardeners and betel merchants who kept at the place their flowers and leaves cool and fresh in summer. Having completed the transaction and paid his creditors the man left for the plains in search of a livelihood, secure in the belief that his wife was provided for fairly well.

The man returned from the plains after twenty years with a little fortune but failed to see his wife where he expected her. When at last he traced her, he found her worn out and prematurely old, for she had taken service at the house of a wealthy man to maintain herself. The husband failed to understand it, for he had left the well to her for her sustenance. "When I

went to the well after your departure," said the woman, "I was turned away and cudgelled. They told me that the well had also been sold." The husband had later approached several courts himself but the judges dismissed his suit every time and characterised his action fraudulent. He finally came to the door-steps of the king to offer his life as a libation in the flame of justice, to obtain justice or to die.

The king examined the sale deed and found that the well had indeed been sold He sought the advice of his councillors and everyone declared that the sale-deed was unambiguous and that the suitor was either insane or a charlatan. In spite of this unanimous verdict against the plaintiff the king felt that what the poor man said was true. He called the defendant and, as was expected, he only confirmed what the judges had said. Some councillors even felt that the king was raking up issues that were absolutely dead.

Of all the parties involved, if anybody was in a fix it was the king. He was taxing his mind to find a way to prove the guilt of the vendee of the property sold twenty years back He was anxious to convince himself and the others of the innocence of the original owner of the house. After a while the subject was apparently dropped and the king told the courtiers of some wonderful tales he had heard and an atmosphere of cheerfulness and jollity was thus built up. In this playful mood the king examined the jewels of his councillors and the ring of the merchant-defendant in the suit before him. Nobody had even a trace of suspicion.

On the pretext of washing his feet the king left his chamber. Calling a trusted servant, he sent him to the accounts clerk of the merchant-defendant with the merchant's ring. He was asked to produce the ring and say to the clerk that the merchant was asking for the ledger for some important purpose. The clerk recognised the master's ring and handed over the ledger.

The king examined many entries carefully but no clue to the issue involved was found. Eventually, however, he came

upon an entry that intrigued him. The merchant had paid a thousand *dinnars* to the official recorder who had drawn up the sale deed of the house. The king felt, and his councillors agreed with him, that a thousand *dinnars* was much too high a sum to be paid for drafting even an important deed, especially for a merchant who is chary of lavishing money. The obvious conclusion was that for the thousand rupees paid to him the scrivener had enabled the merchant to obtain something much more valuable. The scrivener was called, the sale deed was examined once again and it was established that the vendee had been deprived of the well and the outhouse by forgery. By changing* *ra* (र) into *sa* (स) the scrivener wrote 'the house with the well etc.' instead of 'the house without the well etc.' The stand taken by the petitioner was vindicated and the king rejoiced in that the promptings of his conscience had not misled him.

At the unanimous request of the members of the council the king restored to the plaintiff not only the well that was his but also the whole house which he had sold and the merchant was ordered to be expelled from the country.

***Sapanakupasahitam vikritam grham** instead of
Sapanakuparahitam vikritam grham.

Didda's Diplomacy

THE rule of the dynasty founded by Yasaskara came to an end when Pravagupta, a minister, seized the throne after a *coup d'etat* and set aside Sangramdeva, the son of Yasaskara. Pravagupta was succeeded in 950 A. D. by his son Ksemagupta. Perhaps the most remarkable incident in the life of the latter was his marriage to Didda, the daughter's daughter of Bhima, king of the Sahis whose principality stretched from Kabul to Attock. Bhima was the predecessor of Jaipal, Anandapal and Trilochanpal who measured swords with Mahmud of Ghazni.

Didda was a woman of strong likes and dislikes and dominated the scene very early in life. Her husband took another wife Chandralekha, daughter of Phalgunachandra, the warden of the frontier, and Didda never excused the father of the co-wife on this account. She overawed the king Ksemagupta so much that he earned the humiliating epithet of Diddaksema. Her husband died after just a few years in 958. The queen did not end her life with him but assumed the guardianship of the successor to the throne, the infant Abhimanyu, Ksemagupta's son. As a matter of fact other co-wives followed the king in death and ostensibly Didda also prepared to follow suit. She even obtained the permission of Phalgunachandra, the prime minister, for self-immolation. But near the funeral pyre she repented her decision and her death was prevented by another minister Naravahana who was devoted to her.

Phalgunachandra was her first target and though he was no coward he retired to Poonch after laying down his sword in the sanctuary where Ksemagupta had spent his last days. But this did not give her complete satisfaction, for there were still many

people abroad who claimed their descent from Pravagupta. One of them was Mahiman, born of Pravagupta's daughter, and Didda sent orders to exile him. But the man was made of sterner stuff. Not only did he resist but he also provoked many people to raise a revolt, and accordingly a formidable array of rebels rallied round Mahiman. They included Eramantaka of Parihasapura and the Brahmins of Lalitadityapura led by Yasodhara. The rebel armies closed in upon Pampur.

Only one minister Naravahana remained by the side of Didda. Her position was precarious, but she did not give way to panic. She sent her son Abhimanyu, the minor king, away to safety and began to tackle the grave problem facing her. Her enemies stood solidly together as they had sworn by sacred libation, "An attack on any one of us is an attack on all." She tried to create a rift among the enemy ranks and when other methods failed, she used gold lavishly like a seasoned diplomat and won over the Brahmins of Lalitadityapura. Their leader Yasodhara was appointed the supreme commander of the army and soon after Mahiman fell a victim to witchcraft. The rule of Didda was thus established.

Not long after the commander-in-chief, Yasodhara, was sent on an expedition against the Sahi ruler Thakkana. Marching through ravines and defiles he subjugated the enemy but spared his life. Returning home flushed with victory he incurred banishment as the queen felt that he had accepted bribes from Thakkana to spare his life. Once again a mighty revolt was raised and the queen survived only by the skin of her teeth. The minor king was sent away to safety and though Didda had but little support, she held on bravely. At one stage the enemy came to her very palace and was driven back by a desperate sally of the brave Ekanga bodyguard. The steadfastness and courage of Didda enabled her armies to turn the tide. She punished the rebel leaders including Yasodhara. The queen exterminated all opposition including those ministers who had played with the lives of numerous kings.

Of the numerous leaders of standing only one, viz., Naravahana remained. Backbiters and wicked people began to fill Didda's ears with reports against this minister who had remained loyal to her all through the vicissitudes, and she began to harbour suspicions against him. He was so exasperated at her changed behaviour that he languished and died. Her son Abhimanyu also could not stand the humiliation of his mother's sinful life He developed consumption and died. Didda was shocked beyond measure on account of the death of her son and turned what appeared to be a new leaf in the book of her life. Placing on the throne her grandson Nandigupta, she developed an affection for her people and built temples, shrines and hospices. But this phase of her life was also shortlived. Longing for power and the pleasures of life soon got the better of her and she practised sorcery against her infant grandson Nandigupta who embraced death. Two years later his successor Tribhuvana, another grandson, met death at her hands for the same reason.

Bhimagupta, Didda's last grandson, approached the altar of death when she placed him on the throne. In the words of the historian, "With her open misdeeds and excesses she became ,terrifying a hundredfold now." Procuresses and pimps flourished, and distinguished officers, like the lord of the marches, also resorted to indulging the queen thus. Tunga, orginally a grazier of buffaloes from Poonch and later a bearer of despatches, captivated her heart and became her favourite. She gave up all shame in this liason and the commissioner of Srinagar, Bhuyya by name, was administered poison and killed when he expressed disapproval of her association with Tunga. The grandson regnant Bhimagupta also began to express his resentment on her deplorable ways. Without the least qualm of conscience she imprisoned him and tortured him to death.

Thereafter she occupied the throne herself and made Tunga her prime minister. The other ministers, filled with jealousy, were provoked to revolt. They even invited Vigraharaja, Didda's brother's son and induced the Brahmins to go on

hunger - strike. Widespread uprisings were caused by the Brahmins' hunger-strike and a search for Tunga began. But Didda concealed him within her apartment, distributed gold to the fasting Brahmins and broke the confederacy. The position of Tunga was consolidated and the revolting ministers were put to the sword. Vigraharaja disappeared from the scene but kept in touch with the people here through emissaries. Sometime later he induced the Brahmins to resort to hunger-strike once again and they did so in the hope of receiving bribes. But they had overshot the mark, for Tunga attacked them, the emissaries fled and they got asylum in the prison house. Even those Brahmins who had been granted gold by Didda herself were arrested and imprisoned.

Didda left no stone unturned in order to satiate her demoniac thirst for power and pleasures of the body. At last a stage was reached when she felt that she was nearing her end and she thought of appointing a crown prince to succeed to the throne after her death. Like the bitch who preys upon her own litter she had put on end to the offspring of her husband including her own grandsons. Consequently she turned to her brothers' sons, the Sahi princelings, to select her successor, and put the tender-aged boys to a test. A number of apples were thrown to them and each was asked to collect as many as he could. They fought each other, giving blows and scratches. One of them, Sangramraja, collected the maximum number of apples and yet escaped all injury. When asked how he managed to come out unscathed, he replied, "I remained aloof while they gave blows and scratches. I was unhurt and yet secured the fruit". Everybody realised that Sangramaraja was really born for the throne to which he ascended on her death in 1003 A.D. He was one of the many princes of the trans-Indus region called upon by destiny to inherit the sceptre, crown and parasol in Kashmir.

A Family Feud

MOHAMMAD of Ghazni ruined the Sahi kingdom which extended from the Punjab to Kabul and beyond, and contributed many princes to rule the valley of Kashmir. Trilochanpal, the last of the Sahis, sought help from Sangramaraja of Kashmir and the latter sent him many Damara warriors under Tunga, the former paramour and prime minister of Didda. After the defeat of Trilochanpal scions of the Sahi dynasty sought refuge in different states. Three of them, Rudrapal, Diddapal and Anangapal were welcomed by king Ananta (1028—1068) in Kashmir. Radrapal got the king married to his sister-in-law, Suryamati, daughter of the king of Jalandhara, modern Kangra.

Ananta had no great thirst for power but instead he loved the betel leaf and horses. He found able ministers. Besides this his domineering wife applied herself to the affairs of the state and the king himself was content with the wife-like submission to her. After the loss of his son his heart was filled with disgust against pomp and power. He shifted his residence from his palace to a convent and gave largely in charity. He was next persuaded by his wife to abdicate and, in spite of the advice of his prime minister Haladhara, he invested his son Kalasa with the crown. So Kalasa ascended the throne and Ananta suffered to be designated a prince.

In the course of time Kalasa came to wield power independent of his parents and was surrounded by the seekers of favour and patronage. Suryamati repented her indiscretion only when she found Kalasa's wives display jewels and costumes. Kalasa conducted himself deplorably, and charlatans came to the forefront in the guise of *gurus* and procurers in the form of courtiers. Flatterers and satellites prospered. The new king be-

gan to seek women for the promiscuous gratification of his carnal passion. Ministers and courtiers encouraged him to visit their female folk and served as his intermediaries.

On one occasion he was lured by the daughter-in-law of a noble, Jinduraj, and entered his house by stealth at night. Being warned by barking dogs the watchmen rushed at him with naked swords in fear of robbers and his life was saved with difficulty only when he revealed his identity. This incident created a sensation and his parents wept for long when they heard of it. They decided to dethrone and imprison Kalasa and to crown the eldest of their grandsons, named Harsha. The opportune moment came on a day when his mother Suryamati was in silent prayer and meditation. She could not handle the situation personally and Ananta failed to act with firmness and tact. Out of anger they decided to go to Vijayesvara. Collecting all the treasures from Srinagar he reached Vijayesvara where he was joined by many warriors, Damaras, courtiers and noblemen.

Kalasa was also determined to retrieve the lost ground. He rallied his friends, took loans from capitalists, won over the infantry and arrived at Avantipura to fight his father. On his part Ananta made ready to meet the attack. But Suryamati intervened in the family feud. She upbraided Ananta for his relish in the armed clash and reprimanded the rashness of her unfilial son in preparing to overtake his father in battle when he himself was impecunious and unable to withstand the forces of his father. There was a temporary relaxation in hostilities. Kalasa forfeited the property of the partisans of his father but Ananta was prevented by his wife from taking retaliatory measures. Ananta and his wife decided to place the crown on the head of their grandson Harsha ; but the Brahmins started a hunger-strike to bring about reconciliation between father and son, and they succeeded to the extent that the old couple began to live in the city again.

The peace was, however, not to last long. Learning that Kalasa wanted to imprison them, Ananta and his wife fled to

Vijayesvara. The impious son pursued them thither and setting fire to the haystacks for the cavalry he put the panicky infantry to the sword. Once again the queen prevented any retaliatory measures and the king lightened the burden on him by giving their own weight in gold in charity. Emboldened by his father's inactivity Kalasa caused arson at night and the sacred town was reduced to ashes. Neither the troops nor the people had cloth to cover themselves and they took shelter under roofs made of reed-matting. The queen sold a hidden jewel and provided food and raiment for the troops.

Kalasa then ordered his father to be confined to Poonch and Suryamati urged her husband to embrace the decree. It was too much even for such a hen-pecked king as Ananta and set off a bitter quarrel between the old parents, and accusation and counter-accusation followed. "Having destroyed my happiness in this world," bewailed the king, "she is striving to ruin hope of happiness even in the next." It was customary for the kings of Kashmir to await death in their old age in a sanctuary in the faith that they would be shrieved of sins, and Ananta could not find a place of greater sanctity than Vijayesvara, and yet the queen wanted to drive him away to Poonch to soothe her son. The king spoke humiliatingly to her and even repeated the rumour that Kalasa was no son of his but a substitute for his child when it had died.

The queen who had dominated her husband all her life was not to be silent and her tongue spluttered with gall and fire. The king was stung with pain at her words and thrust his dagger into his bottom. Streams of blood began to flow while the queen looked on in bewilderment. He caused it to be proclaimed that he was suffering from a haemorrhage and bravely bled to death. The queen made arrangements for a befitting funeral for her husband ended her life in flames by the pyre lit for his body.

The Prince who was a Piper

ANANTA (1028—1063 A. D.) committed harakiri and passed on the treasure to his grandson Harsha. Kalasha (1063—1069 A. D.) patched up his differences with his son Harsha, secured an allowance for himself and took his child and the treasure under his own guardianship. In the course of time Harsha became renowned as an accomplished prince, a brave warrior and a generous patron. Above all he attained celebrity for his learning, knowledge of different arts and perfection in music. He extended his patronage to men of learning and accomplishment. He even sang in public for the gratification of his father and earned from him gifts for the maintenance of his establishment. On one occasion when he was singing before his father and the courtiers felt enthralled, Kalasha left the chamber. Like any other virtuoso he felt wounded by this lack of appreciation on the part of his father, the king. Taking advantage of the situation some courtiers put the suggestion into his ear that he should seize the throne. Although for a long time the prince resisted their attempts to provoke him, ultimately the seed sprouted in his heart and he took counsel with his friends to give short shrift to the king.

No sooner was the decision taken than scores of sowers of dissension began to fish in troubled waters. The king heard about it and tried to allay the suspicions of the prince about Ananta's treasure. But the emissaries gave a twist to the situation and Kalasha was compelled to order a siege of the prince. The king nevertheless made it clear that if Harsha were killed he would cut his own head.

At his residence, which is supposed to have been a little

below the present site of Habba Kadal, Harsha was surrounded by his own supporters. When the king's troops besieged the prince's palace, his own bravoes compelled the latter, on pain of danger to his person, to offer resistance. "Your father will forgive you," they protested, "but we shall suffer death for rallying round you." Harsha had therefore no choice but to strike against his father's troops and thus was exposed to grave risk at their hands, or in the alternative, at those of his own bravoes He was saved from the Scylla and Charybdis by his father's chamberlain. Rushing into the midst of Harsha's troops he remonstrated with the prince on his half-hearted efforts to fight the besiegers. "Give your face a shave," he advised him, "put on the headgear of victory and prepare for your wedding with the heavenly nymphs." Having thus cleverly evaded the suspicion of the tough bravoes he thrust Harsha into the inner apartment along with a barber and closely secured the doors. The chamberlain then ordered the royal troops to go into action. Harsha was safely sheltered from any reprisals from his followers as from the king's men. His bodyguard ultimately gave in and he fell into the hands of the king, his father, who had him cast into prison

Harsha was thus imprisoned by his own father who became intimate with the wives of the prince. One of these, Sugala, wishing the death of her husband conspired with Nonaka, a minister, and a cook to poison the royal prisoner. But the latter was warned betimes and caused the death of two dogs to whom he had the food thrown. He had a faithful cook Prayaga who managed to feed him on what little he could smuggle in. It was in these circumstances that the king felt his end approaching. He found the ministers against the enthronement of Harsha. Therefore he asked them to banish the prince after handing over the treasure to him. But the ministers defeated his purpose and Harsha continued to he lodged in prison while Utkarsha, another son, came from Loharu to wear the crown.

Kalasha's only yearning, as he lay at the Martanda temple awaiting his death, was to see Harsha, his eldest son. The ministers ignored his order and he felt great misery. Outside his room he heard a vocalist sing a composition of Harsha. The king looked through the hole in the door and sighed for his son. He received but what he had given to his father Ananta.

The new king, Utkarsha, Harsha's younger brother, was the governor of Loharu in Poonch when his father ruled in Srinagar. He got a contingent of Thakkuras from Loharu to secure Harsah's confinement. But people in Kashmir proper knew little of him and they wanted Harsha to rule them Some of them even threw flowers at him through the prison windows in token of their desire to see him crowned. Two step-brothers of the king raised a rebellion and the king decided to put an end to Harsha's life. He called the commandant of the prison guards and showed him two rings. "If I have this ring sent to you," he told him holding one, "Harsha is to be done to death; if this one, he is to be released."

The accomplished captive Harsha endeared himself to the guards and won over even the hostile elements among them by relating to them tales of Harishchandra and other righteous men who had persevered through misfortune to a happy end. Meanwhile the king gave the signal for the execution of the captive but through a fortunate mistake sent the ring to the guards that was a token for his release Consequently Harsha soon joined the ranks of bis step-brothers in the battlefield. Everybody was taken by surprise and the king saw clearly the futility of prolonging the battle. Peace was patched up and Harsha rallied a large retinue round him

Reaching the lion-gate of the palace he wanted to report in person to the king the end of the hostilities when the commander of the palace-guard advised him thus, "You escaped death once by the very skin of your teeth; why do you seek it once again inside? Steady your heart, and go and sit on the royal throne." While he was considering the pros and cons of this bold suggestion his retainers brought the lion-throne from the

treasury and Harshdeva sat on it. Sugala, his wife who had plotted with his father and his minister to poison him, seized the opportunity and sat by his side to gain the status of queen consort. The coronation ceremony was performed and Utkarsha was cast into prison.

Once on the throne he radiated his munificence like the sun. His court was resplendent with gorgeous costumes, jewels and fragrance. He conferred favours generously upon his petitioners. Himself a highly learned man he gave the gifts of gold and precious stones to scholars and men of learning. He also bestowed upon them privileges by allowing them free enjoyment of the horse, the palanquin, the parasol and the like at the expense of the state. His reputation as a patron of learning travelled far and wide. Bilhana a Kashmiri poet who had left Kashmir during the reign of Kalasha flourshed as a court poet in Karnatic and the Chalukya king Vikramaditya conferred upon him the highest privilege of the parasol. But even he longed for the honours which poets enjoyed at the hands of Harsha in Kashmir.

At heart the king was more of a musician than a sovereign. In the course of his rule he disgusted the people by many infamous deeds such as the desecration of temples. But they never failed to pay tributes to the songs composed by him. Long after he was removed from the scene Kalhana paid him a tribute in the words,"Even at the present day when a song of his who composed vocal music is heard, tear-drops glisten on the eye lashes of even his enemies". It was but natural for him to gladden the hearts of musicians and he lavishly showered gold on their troupes to make them emulate royalty. Later, when he started robbing temples of their wealth, it was a singer who saved a statue of Buddha at Parihasapura, his birth-place, from destruction at the hands of the king He gave an elephant togethr with its mate as a gift to a well-versed musician Bhimanayaka who pleased him with the playing of the drum. Harsha favoured Kalhana's uncle Kanaka with a lakh of gold dinnars as a reward for the assiduity he showed in learning music from the king.

Stupidity

A historian does not take sides. As a humble devotee of the spirit of history he is disinterested in the rise and fall of individual kings. Kalhana who counted ripples on the river of the kings of Kashmir was an embodiment of such disinterestedness. There appears to be one exception, however, wherein the historian could not conceal his sympathy, his admiration for the nobility and generosity of the king and his lamentation over the short-coming of the king leading to his fall and death. A tragedian impresses the audience with a sense of waste of a great deal of excellent human material, of a promising career cut short, of an orchard laid waste by canker when about to bear sweet and luscious fruit. This exception was his contemporary and his father's patron Harshdeva, a prince accomplished in music, dancing and poetry, a patron of men of letters, a noble and generous friend who had won the hearts of the people. For these distinctive attainments the sense of the historian's grief at the ultimate folly and failure of Harshdeva appears to be too deep for tears. Says Kalhana about him, "No other king was seen in this age who like him had been full of prosperity and in no other case a humiliating funeral like his was seen...Or perhaps it was due to just one thing—aversion to war—whereby the exalted position charming in every way of that high-minded king was shattered. Or that he suffered his judgement to be swayed by others was his only failing....." Again and again Kalhana points out how confusion of thought dragged Harsha to his inglorious and pathetic end.

In the fall of the prince through his own folly and stupidity the historian seems to feel a betrayal of the faith, confidence

and hope that numerous people had placed in Harsha. Many anecdotes have been related of how he made himself a butt of ridicule.

Harsha was credulous and indiscreet. One day his courtiers brought to his presence a dignified lady befittingly dressed and bejewelled. They told him that she was Bappika, his mother, come from heaven and that she desired something from her royal son. Harsha at once fell at her feet and rewarded her with great wealth. Upon this the lady took her departure. On another occasion his attention was invited to several women who were appropriately attired. He was told that they were goddesses come from heaven for a glimpse of his form and figure. The king felt flattered and made suitable presents to them. Thus his courtiers managed to rob him with both hands.

Once in a fit of rage he marched towards Rajouri and laid seige to it. The chieftain of Rajouri who had accepted the suzerainty of the ruler of Kashmir sought refuge in the castle. The seige turned out to be a prolonged one and neither side was in a mood to give in. Meanwhile the people of that principality were subjected to great misery owing to the presence of troops amongst them. They thought of a plan to rid themselves of this menace and that was to move Madan, one of the courtiers of the king and his warden of the marches, to somehow arrange the return of Harsha to the valley of Kashmir. They brought him presents and he agreed to use his good offices for them. Madan had not to put up a strong effort. He told Harsha that a contingent of foreign Turks had been seen advancing towards Kashmir and counselled the king to look to the defence of his capital. The king himself employed Turkish mercenaries, perhaps as his body guard, but he was so alarmed at the rumour circulated by Madan that forgetting to take counsel with his Turkish centurians he repaired to Kashmir and the seige of Rajuri was thus lifted.

Another testament to his stupidity beats all others. One

of his courtiers produced before him a picture of Candala, the wife of the raja of Karnatak, a paragon of beauty. The picture representation of the beauty of the lady so betwitched Harshdeva that it appeared as if his head had turned. He talked in terms of leading an expedition for the conquest of Karnataka and took fanciful vows in token of his determination to desist from living his normal life till he had secured the lady. A palace was set apart for the residence of Candala and a contingent of maid-servants appointed to keep in readiness for attending upon the lady.

The courtier Madan was appointed chamberlain to the lady and he secured a good deal of money from the silly king in the name of the lady on one pretext or another.

Passage of time far from restoring the king to normalcy served to fan the smouldering fire into a flame. The king began seriously to plan an expediton to Karnataka. The courtiers who had been indulging his whim all this while felt considerably alarmed at this development. "Something must be done at this juncture," they decided, "to lay the ghost. It is otherwise bound to lead to serious consequences." They took counsel with Madan. It was no use advising the king against the luxury of his passion, for such a move would not do. They decided upon another trick of confidence.

They submitted to Harsha a letter reported to have been addressed to him by the coveted lady of his heart herself from Karnataka. The letter read, "I was a *hourie* in paradise which I forsook because of a longing to meet your majesty. On my way I fell into the hands of the raja of the Deccan and have perforce been won to his board and bed. I am burning with the desire to seek release from him and to wait upon your majesty. Till my ambition is attained I am sending to your majesty a few of my choicest maids with commands to serve the pleasure of your majesty. They will present their compliments on such and such date.....". The king felt greatly flattered and eagerly awaited the arrival of the 'maid-servants.'

On the day appointed Madan presented to his liege a few young and smart girls suitably dressed. The foolish king actually believed them to have been sent from heaven by way of Karnataka and was lost in disports and dalliance with them. Harsha's idiosyncracy was extreme capriciousness, culpable credulity and whimsicality fatal for a ruler. His name has contributed a word to the Kashmiri language, for when somebody sets his heart on a project far too unreal, he earns the appellation *hershidil* a corruption of Harshadiv

II

Harshdeva met his end. In his constellation—as in that of Duryodhana—, Kalhana tells us, the moon was in the tenth astrological house and malignant stars stood in the seventh and the fifth, which betokened the extermination of his own dynasty. A new ruling dynasty inherited the throne of Kashmir and several rulers succeeded one another. One of them Vopayadeva so distinguished himself in stupidity as to have been immortalised in the word *vopad* which is synonymous with obnoxious idiocy.

Vopayadeva was so silly that he considered pebbles and smaller stones as the offspring of bigger ones. His heart was filled with pity and he directed that the tender stones be fed on milk so that they could grow.

On one occasion he went for an airing on the Dal lake. He wore a smile on his face and cast a glance downwards. Noticing his own reflection in water he mistook it for somebody laughing at him out of scorn. Not able to stand the jeering he was filled with anger which the reflection faithfully reciprocated. This grimace infuriated him and he struck his 'adversary' with his hand. As a result the bejewelled ring of his finger slipped off and dropped into water. He marked the surface of water at the spot with a cross and proceeded on his way.

When he reached the palace his courtiers hinted at the missing ring. He replied that it had dropped into water when he had gone for an airing on the Dal. Relying on expert divers

in his realm he instructed his attendants to go and get the ring from the bottom of the lake. "Pray, your majesty," they submitted, "could we have an idea of the place where the ring slipped off the finger ?"

"I have marked a cross with my finger over there," was the innocent reply.

The courtiers felt so overwhelmed that the anecdote became indelibly imprinted on the tablets of their memory. Even today anybody suffering from an intractable mind or possessed of incurable morbidity is dubbed as *vopad*, a contraction of Vopayadeva.

The Defrauding Baniya

HARSHADEVA, the monarch who was a musician, fell to the sword of the rebels, his own cousins Sussala and Uccala, in 1101 A. D. He was succeeded on the throne by Uccala, the elder of the two brothers, the younger one, Sussala, being invested as the ruler of Lohara in Poonch. In the disorder that had been accumulating over the years, government officials had grown arrogant and the people complained to the new ruler against the harassment they suffered at the hands of the official class. In order to win over people the king devised methods of circumventing red-tape, and delay in awarding punishment to the faulty was eliminated. He also set himself the task of dividing officers and noblemen one from another and thus won a breathing space. He renovated temples, rebuilt towns destroyed earlier and honoured Brahmins with gifts.

One day a petition was presented to the king by one of his subjects as the judges had failed to satisfy him. His plaint was that he had deposited a lakh of *dinnars* with the banking house of a Baniya with the intention of falling back upon the sum in the days of his adversity. The Banyia who appeared to be friendly to him had welcomed it. From time to time the depositor had drawn upon various sums and the Baniya had allowed him to withdraw freely. Twenty or thirty years after the deposit had been made originally, the depositor came to the Baniya to withdraw the balance, but the latter evaded it for a considerable period. He employed many pretexts but never gave any indication of his intention to defraud his friend. On the other hand he was always full of smiles and assertions of friendship.

The depositor, however, wanted his money and, having lost

his patience, he became insistent. The Baniya was well prepared for this turn in the situation. He displayed the utter loss of temper, denied that anything was left with him to the credit of the depositor and in fact claimed a refund of overdrawals and interest. The client was dumb-founded ; he did not deny having drawn upon the Baniya from time to time, but the petty sums he had withdrawn could not swell into a lakh of *dinnars* that he had deposited. When he protested the Baniya, who was nothing if not thorough, came out with his ledger and confronted him with the record of his debits through the years. It made an interesting reading : Six hundred *dinnars* had been withdrawn according to the ledger to pay tolls for crossing bridges ; the maid-servant of the depositor had taken melted butter worth fifty for a boil on the foot ; to feed the kittens of his cat, mice and the extract of fish had been bought for a hundred *dinnars* ; butter as an emollient for the feet, rice-powder, honey and melted butter were purchased for seven hundred *dinnars* during the fortnight of the ceremonial baths of the *shraddhas* ; three hundred *dinnars* were given to a mendicant who subjected himself to torture ; a hundred or two hundred were to be reckoned towards the supply of incense, the the roots of Sanda and onions presented to the *gurus*.

The Baniya gave other details of the sums advanced to the depositor on specified dates as entered in the ledger. When added these not only made up the total of a lakh but actually overflowed into an account for the Baniya himself. The entries were recorded with a faultless regularity of the day, the amount and the month and the year, and the depositor was dumb-founded. In polished language the Baniya asked him to close the dispute after paying to him what he owed The depositor could not, of course, accept this contention and referred the matter to many common friends. But the entries in the ledger left no doubt in their minds that he had withdrawn the entire amount as proved by the Baniya. The depositor sought justice in the courts of the judges but on the basis of the evidence submitted even they found no loophole in the defence presented by the banker. The depositor was therefore compel-

led to petition the king himself in the hope that his majesty would do him justice.

After hearing the plaint in person from the depositor the king felt more than convinced that the Baniya with the unctuous tongue had a trick up his sleeve which he had employed to defraud the trusting depositor But he did not want to deny the banker the opportunity to defend himself and to present his case. The Baniya made obeisance to the king and submitted the ledger to prove his case. The statement of accounts appeared to be fool-proof and the king's councillors nodded their heads in approbation The defendant prayed to the sovereign that the depositor be ordered to refund to him what stood against his name in the ledger.

The king gave some thought to this knotty problem and at last it appeared that he had discovered an approach to its solution. He asked the Baniya where he had kept the money when it was deposited with him. When the Baniya told him that he had kept it in a jar the king asked him to produce the jar along with what little was left of the original amount. With an escort the Baniya went to his house and placed the jar in front of the king. On examination the contents of the jar revealed many coins minted in the name of Uccala himself, though the original transaction had taken place long before he ascended the throne. He asked sarcastically, "Do kings mint coins in anticipation for their successors ? The deposit had been made in the time of King Kalasa but I find many of the coins of later rulers too. No further proof is needed that the merchant has been making use of the amount for his own business."

He declared that the depositor was entitled to the profit that the Baniya had earned on the amount and accepted the statement of the depositor. Recalling how Yasaskara had banished a merchant involved in fraud and forgery he reprimanded the Baniya and ordered him to repay the depositor the whole amount together with whatever interest was due at the usual rates. The petitioner was thus satisfied that he had got justice.

A Soldier's Stratagem

THE Central Asian Mongol hordes of the early centuries of the second millennium of the Christian era made themselves notorious by destruction and massacres. Wherever they went they left behind a trail of blood, bones and ashes. So ruthless were these hordes that the very mention of their visitation struck panic in the hearts of the people. They swept like a whirlwind over vast areas in Asia and spread devastation.

On one occasion one leader came to Afghanistan and conquered it without much effort and anxiety. Kashmir was at that period ruled by Jaisimha (1129-59 A. D.). After decades of misrule, internecine fighting and political instability Jaisimha had been able to bring into existence some sort of order and cohesion in thec ountry. Jaisimha belonged to the line of Sahi princes who had ruled various principalities in the Panjab, trans-Indus states and Afghanistan. On the arrival of the *yavanas* or Mongols in the country last named, all these princes felt alarmed and they began to form plans to meet this new danger just outside the door-steps of India. They had, however, not long to wait. The invader soon sent one of his generals across the western mountains to knock at the gateway to the plains of India, and there he stood like a hobgoblin for the people and the princes of India.

The latter had already had a foretaste of the benignity of foreign invaders when by their conduct they had encouraged Mohamad of Ghazni to exercise his lust for power and wealth in the hospitable sub-continent of India. The news of the arrival of the Mongol alarmed them and many princes joined hands to resist his advances. One of the princes who offered himself for the patriotic defence of the country was

Jaisimha of Kashmir. During the many years of feud in his family for the possession of the throne of Kashmir his troops had not allowed their armour to rust nor their bodies to grow pursy. With their characteristic agility they proceeded to the Panjab and arrayed themselves along with others near the bank of the Indus.

This was not the first time for Kashmiri troops to face foreign enemies. Nearly a hundred years earlier they had been rushed by queen Didda to aid Trilochanpal in resisting the invader Mohamad of Ghazni. On that occasion they were led by the minister Tunga, originally a cowherd of Poonch. Tunga had fought bravely but had not followed to the letter the instructions of the generalissimo with the result that he had to cut a sorry figure and lost face. Jaisimha was wiser for this historicals fact and he wanted to make his strategy foolproof. The foremost requirement was military intelligence. Jaisimha asked the commander of his forces, Mulchander, a scion of the ruling family of Nagarkot, Kangra, to nominate some scouts for the purpose of spying round and within the enemy's lines and report. Mulchander was as wise as he was loyal to his master. There could be no dearth of scouts, but knowing full well that the loyalty of individuals to a master was only skin-deep, especially in Kashmir, Mulchander did not want to entrust the responsibility to any half-penny two-penny fellow and run the risk of betraying to the enemy the secrets of his own army. He pondered over the matter, long and deep, but could spot no one to his own satisfaction. Convinced that there was no alternative, Mulchander decided to undertake the hazardous mission personally.

He put on disguise and when the night spread its dark awning he ventured out. There was not much activity in the camp of the enemy and the Kashmirian spy had no difficulty in fulfilling the purpose he had come for. Using his eyes and ears effectively he made a mental note of everything of any significance throughout the lines. When he was satisfied that

his task had practically been accomplished, Mulchander stole into the tent of the Turkish commander himself. This was done with such great ease that his success came to be attributed later to the power of incantations and charms. He was amazed not a little at the complacence of the invading forces, for he found the commander blissfully asleep and there was no one about who could be supposed to be keeping guard over him. Mulchander had a look round and regarded everything with the sharp eye of the experienced soldier that he was. He did not want to kill the adversary in his sleep for fear of incurring sin. It was also against the code of chivalry inherited by him. But to apprise the Turk of his feat he placed his pair of shoes at the pillowed head of the snoring captain and slunk away quietly so that no body in the enemy's camp was any the wiser about the nocturnal visit of the Kashmirian commander.

When the Mongol leader got up in the morning the pair of shoes in an unfamiliar place caught his attention. He also found a letter the contents of which amazed and alarmed him. It ran. "I, Mulchander, commander of the army of Jaisimha, sovereign of Kashmir, reached here when thou wert drowned in the ocean of sleep. It occured to me that I should sever thy head from thy body and thus rid humanity of thy tyranny and cunning. But I did not deem it befitting either my sense of hospitality or my chivalry to kill an enemy in his slumber. In view of this I desisted from giving thee short shrift. Creatures unwary and careless, as thou art, should not risk confronting men of valour and prowess which is tantamount to seeking the mouth of the python.....".

The Turkish commander was so overawed that he sought peacc with the ruler of Kashmir and beat a retreat. Jaisimha returned to Kashmir where Mulchander was rewarded with a fief in the valley of the Sindh and exalted to the highest dignity. He built a castle at Gaganger and enjoyed prestige and power throughout his life. His office was inherited by his descendents for several generations.

Kota Rani Meets Her Love

TOWARDS the beginning of the fourteenth century A. D. Kashmir was subjected to an invasion by a Mongol named Zoulqadr Khan. The visitation was one of the worst in the long history of the valley. The Mongols swept over every village and hamlet, carrying bloodshed, death and destruction wherever they went. Sahadeva, the representative of the effete Hindu ruling dynasty was so completely demoralised that instead of fighting the invader he decided to tax the people and pay a heavy ransom to the invader. But the Brahmins resisted the imposition of a tax and threatened to resort to a hunger strike. The king, therefore. ran for his life to Kishtwar even before Zoulqadr had actually set his feet in the valley. Ramchandra, the commander of the Kashmir army, regarding open conflict futile, took refuge in his castle at Gaganger on the route to Leh where he granted protection to many people. Other nobles similarly sought personal safety wherever they could and the people were left to their own fate. They suffered so badly at the hands of the invader that they betook to hills and forests leaving their hearth and home to the enemy. Thousands met their death in this manner and the presence of the enemy in the midst of this land prevented the survivors from cultivating their lands. Famine took its own toll of the helpless people of Kashmir. On the departure of the Mongol, who met his death alongwith his troops and 50,000 Kashmirian slaves while on his way back, hardly one person out of ten was left.

After the darkness was dispelled the people started making efforts to rehabilitate themselves. Ramchandra, the commander-in-chief, emerged from his castle to find his country utterly

devastated. As a descendant of Mulchandra, Commander of the armies under Jaisimha (1128-55 AD) he belonged to an illustrious family of warriors who for generations were entrusted with the defence of the country In the absence of the sovereign the people looked upto Ramchandra for protection and he shifted his headquarters from the hilly Gagangir to Andrakot, a castle near the Manasbal lake in the valley proper Taking advantage of the destruction caused by Zulqadr Khan's invasion Khasa tribesmen from the hills to the northwest made skirmishes to extort what they could from the debilitated victims. But Ramchandra took measures to ward them away. He had under him two foreigners who had been driven to the valley by destiny which had in store for each of them a glorious role. One of them was Renchen, a Tibetan nobleman who had been granted refuge in Kashmir against persecution in Tibet. The other was Shahmir. a Muslim from Swat in the territory between India and Afghanistan. Ramchandra dispatched both of them to meet the Khasas who were thus repelled successfully. For sometime peace prevailed. Both the foreigners thus attained eminence and prestige.

This was a situation when anyone enjoying the status of Ramchandra would have ascended the throne to put an end to all uncertainty and given the country a stable administration. But the accredited leader of the people did not do so either out of a sense of loyalty to the sovereign who was alive or because of a feeling of diffidence or modesty. He did not come to Srinagar but continued his stay in his castle at Andrakot. Thus he let the situation get out of hand The Tibetian refugee Renchan was more shrewd and planned carefully to take advantage of the fluid state of affairs. He could not win over the populace easily to himself because he belonged to a different race and country. But he showed the capacity of satisfying the nobility with a *fait accompli* and he thus won the throne of Kashmir which was a rare feat for an individual under similar circumstances.

Renchen deceitfully sent some pony loads every day into

the fort of Ramchandra under pretence of selling cloth. About this time many Tibetians had come to Kashmir with pony loads of grain because Zulqadr Khan's invasion had led to a severe famine. Conspiring with the Tibetian muleteers Renchan had small arms concealed in their panniers filled with cloth and grain and escorted them to the castle of Ramchandra at Lar in response to the latter's demand These sacks of small arms were kept under lock and key in a godown and Renchen assumed submissiveness and humility to disarm all suspicion. At night he gave the signal. His men got up, grasped the arms and murdered Ramchandra. His son Ravanchandra was held in custody and whoever offered resistance was given short shrift. Having accomplished this task at Andrakot, Renchana hastened to Srinagar where with the assistance of some nobles and fighting classes he ascended the throne in A. D. 1320. He met with little resistance.

To consolidate his hold upon the throne Renchan secured the hand of Ramchandra's daughter Kota Rani in marriage. Her brother, Ravan, was exalted as the prime minister and the fiefs of Lar and the region beyond were conferred upon him. He also made use of the service of the other foreigner Shahmir who became his envoy and the tutor to his son. In the words of the historian Jonaraja, "Renchana dried the tears in the eyes of the Brahmins whom the King had fined."

Renchan wanted to make his occupation of the throne inviolate. Being a Buddhist he wanted to be admitted to the privileges of Hinduism in order to bring about solidarity and unity in the country. The Brahmins under their head Devaswami turned down this request Aware of the handicap of his race and religion, Renchan declared that he would adopt the faith of the person upon whom he set his eyes first at dawn. The next morning his curiosity was aroused when he heard the words "Allah O Akbar, Allah O Akbar" (God is great). He got up and saw Syed Sharaf-ud-din alias Bulbul Shah, a devout Muslim, offering his prayers by the river bank. Renchana was so impressed by him that he embraced Islam and came to be

known as Malik Sadr-ud-Din. Whether the conversion was planned in this fashion by Shahmir who was eager to strengthen his own position is not clear. Apparently nobody took it ill and in fact people in high places felt induced to embrace the faith of the sovereign. The members of the king's household were followed by Kota Rani's brother Ravan Chandra into the fold of Islam. Many noblemen and officials followed suit and there appeared to be no organised revolt or resentment in any quarter against this conversion. A revolution of far reaching consequences took place silently and imperceptibly, not through the instrumentality of a Muslim conquerer but a Tibetian refugee who was born a Buddhist.

Malik Sadr-ud-Din (or Renchan Shah) died after a reign of about three years in A. D. 1323 as a result of fatal wounds he received while fighting in a revolt by Tukka, the dismissed prime minister. Sahadeva's brother Udyan Deva had taken refuge in Pakhli, the hilly region of the northwest when Zulqadr Khan had subjected Kashmir to his visitation. Finding the time ripe he returned and ascended the throne with the support of the nobles and Renchan's widow Kota Rani whom he married. He made Shahmir his prime minister. He had enjoyed the throne hardly for three or four years when a Turkish invader Urden entered the valley at the head of a large force and Udyandeva fled the country to seek shelter in Ladakh. His queen, Kota Rani was made of a sterner stuff. Scion of a family of warriors she directed Shahmir, the prime minister, to organise resistance against the invader. Shahmir who also was tutor to Haider, son of Renchana and Kota Rani, rose to the occasion and united all the feudal chiefs against the invader by reminding them of the consequences of their disunity against Zulqadr Khan. Kota also played her part tactfully. She wrote to the invader that as the country was without a king he might govern as if he were the head of the dynasty. He was deceived and sent his troops away. On pretence of celebrating festivities the nobles detained and ultimately defeated him. Shahmir was thus the acknowledged leader of the nobi-

lity and Udyandeva, who returned to his country, entrusted the administration entirely to his hands. Udyandeva passed away after a few years in 1339 A. D. Kota Rani his widow spent fifty days in mourning over his death in the castle of Andrakot which being an island could be defended.

When Shahmir lived in his native village of Swat, his grand-father, who was credited with considerable spiritual powers, is said to have prophesied that his grandson would become the king of Kashmir and that his descendants would occupy the throne for several generations This had prompted Shahmir to migrate to Kashmir alongwith his family inA.D.130, Sahadeva had conferred upon him a fief in Kruhin near Baramulla. Shahmir had kept his real intention a secret but found himself moving towards the goal step by step. Finding the throne without a sovereign and the royal family deep in mourning he felt that the opportune time had arrived for him to attain the exaltation in his destiny as prophesied by his ancestor. He left Kota Rani and her family to their mourning at Andrakot and came to Srinagar and entered into a conspiracy with many nobles and fighting classes like the Lavanyas (Lones). He had already won over several feudal lords with suitable matrimonial alliances. The lords of Pattan, Bhringhi and Bhangil were married to Shahmiri daughters while the daughters of others entered his own household. Those who were won over were promised a share in the spoils of his adventure while seeds of dissension were sown amongst those who still appeared to be loyal to the family of the deceased sovereign.

Kota was aware of the adverse possiblities in the fluid situation and, for fear of Shahmir, kept the death of Udyandeva a secret for four days. She even discarded Haider, her eldest son by Renchan, lest Shahmira raise him to the throne under his own guardianship. Out of the same fear Kota bestowed honour on the commander-in-chief Bhatta Bhikshana who brought up her younger son. Shahmir was, however, determined to outwit her and her nobles. Seeing a strong rival in Bhatta Bhikshana, he acted swiftly. Out of a stratagem he

pretended illness and it came to be known that his end was near. Kota wanted to make sure and sent Bhatta Bhikshana to him along with others. They found Shahmir's palace overcast with gloom on account of impending death and people were discussing whether perspiration was good for one suffering from biliousness.

In view of this turn in the health of Shahmira, Kota's emissary agreed to see him alone. When he came into the presence of the socalled patient, the latter sprang up and killed him. Hearing this news Kota determined to besiege Shahmir but was deterred by her ministers, who were favourably disposed towards Shahmir, from taking such a step. "It is the decree of fate,"* they said.

Shahmir proclaimed himself king with the support of his feudal allies in A. D. 1339. He took several steps to rally the people round him. The nobles who helped him were amply rewarded and he fixed the land rent from the farmers at one fifth of the produce. In spite of that he felt that he could not be secure as long as Kota Rani was not reconciled to his sovereignty. She had egged him on to fight the Turkish invader Urden and she could as well inspire others to revolt against his own accession to the throne. Deciding upon nipping in the bud this evil to his throne Shahmir rushed to Andrakot and sent to the bereaved queen the offer of marriage. Mindful of his antecedents and his status as the protege of her family she promptly spurned the offer. His first plan having failed Shahmir laid siege to the castle. Her commander-in-chief Bhiksana-

*In 1947 Jawaharlal Nehru and other Indian leaders passed through a similar emotional experience when circumstances compelled them to accept partition of the erstwhile Indian subcontinent. In the words of Maulana Abul Kalam Azad in ***India Wins Freedom***, "Jawaharlal asked me in despair what other alternative was there to accepting partition. He recognised that partition was evil, but held that circumstances were inevitably leading in that direction. He said that it ***was inevitable and it would be wisdom not to oppose what was bound to happen.***"

bhatta had been foully killed by Shahmir and many of her suporters, having shifted their allegiance advised her to submit to the usurper. Being thus hard-pressed Kota Rani could not offer any resistance and reluctantly agreed to his proposal of marriage. Shahmir raised the siege and Kota Rani accompanied him to Srinagar after the marriage ceremony was solemnised.

That night Shams-ud-din awaited his last-wed queen in his bed chamber. She was to be more than a wedded woman and queen, for with her acquiescence all the apprehensions of revolt against his rule would end and immense political power would accrue to him Bedight in resplendent garments and scintillating jewels she stepped into his chamber. As each of her legs moved forward her anklets yielded melodious notes and a cascade of perfume was unleashed. No emperor could have desired a more rapturous climax to his quest for love and power. But when Shahmir advanced to receive Kota in his arms, she drew out a dagger from under her garments and thrust it into her chest even before the dazed king caught its significance. "This is my acceptance of the proposal for sharing his bed," she declared as blood spurted from her breast. Shams-ud-din stood aghast for a while. He had not bargained for such a consummation. Having seized the coveted throne and founded a ruling dynasty he had failed to win over the coveted lady of the land. Thus a political and dynastic revolution with far-reaching consequences took place without a bang. The invasions of Zulqadr Khan and Urden created conditions favourable for a change, a rupture with the past, but the revolution was accomplished with comparative quiet primarily because of internal dissensions. The people of Kashmir who claimed descent from Kashyap and other sages moved towards a new synthesis of their cultural heritage enriched with the Islamic stream.

Suhabhatta

SULTAN Sikander is remembered to this day as few other kings are. Orthodox Muslims regard him as a zealous follower of the faith. When he ascended the throne in A. D. 1394 he found the valley of Kashmir dotted with temples sacred to the Hindus. These temples had been raised by kings, queens and noblemen for hundreds of years. With the zeal of an iconoclast he pulled down many magnificent structures housing images of gods in gold and silver which enriched the king. He was not the first king to desecrate temples, for king Harsha, a contemporary of Kalhana, had despoiled temples in order to meet a financial crisis But Sikander razed the temples to the ground. Many people sought conversion to Islam, the faith of the king. Among them was a Brahmin named Suhabhatta. Whether his conversion to Islam brought peace to his mind is not known but it certainly brought him temporal power. He was a high dignitary of the state already ; on his conversion he was christened Malik Saif-ud-Din and Sultan Sikander made him his chief minister which office he enjoyed even under the successors of his first royal patron.

Malik Saif-ud-Dln is said to have been a man gifted with quick assessment of a situation and sound judgement. Many anecdotes have been recorded by historians in testimony of his wisdom On one occasion a petitioner approached him with a plaint. He had entrusted a shepherd with his mare for grazing on the meadows on higher altitudes in early summer. With the approach of the cold season the shepherd came back to the plains with his herd and returned to each owner what belonged to him. In the interval this particular mare had been delivered of a colt but another man who owned a mare that had been

grazing under similar circumstances claimed the colt as his own. This led to exchange of hot words and altercation between the two and the case aroused a good deal of interest in the village and latter in the neighbourhood The village elders met, examined evidence, called witnesses, sat in deliberation day in and day out and yet they could he no wiser about the matter in issue. The facts of the case were summed up thus:

Two mares, offspring of one dam and sire, belonged to two fellow-villagers As could be expected, the two mares looked exactly alike. Early in summer the two mares were passed on to the charge of the same herdsman for grazing in pastures on the higher altitudes. Both the mares had been delivered of colts at about the same time and the colts had looked alike. But when the herdsman informed the owners of the mares of this fact, one of the colts fell a pray to wild beasts and only one was left. Since the mares looked alike, the latter would sometimes follow one mare and sometimes the other. Neither the herdsman nor anyone else could say convincingly who was the dame of the surviving colt. The village elders failed to come to a satisfactory conclusion and the plaint was ultimately submitted to Malik Saif-ud-Din for justice.

The problem was intriguing even for the wisdom of the eminent minister. Neither the law nor his learning had brought to his knowledge a case of this kind. His strong commonsense, however, brought to him a solution that was convincing and effective. He held his court on the bank of the river and had the two mares together with the colt produced before him. Holding the mares by his side he ordered the colt to be plunged into the river. The colt was taken to the midstream and hurled into water while both the mares were looking on. The mare that had given birth to the colt could not stand the sight and ran headlong into the river after its offspring. The other, not prompted by any maternal instinct, displayed no symptom of perturbation and continued to look on. The issue was thus decided beyond any doubt or suspicion.

On another occasion Malik Saif-ud-Din had to deal with a case as thorny as the first one, or a little more so as no animals were involved. A tailor was so poor that he could not make his both ends meet in spite of the hard labour he put in. It occurred to him once that he could tide over his difficulties for a while if depending upon the good faith of his clientele he played a little fraud The stratagem was to privately dispose of the garments lying with him but to make pretence that his house had been broken into and despoiled of everything by thieves. Accordingly, he put his plan into practice one night. The garments that belonged to clients had already changed hands Now the tailor, having kept his doors ajar, raised a hue and cry that his house had been burgled and that the valuable garments of his esteemed patrons had been taken away. He began to shed crocodile tears in profusion. But he had misjudged the situation No sooner had he raised a shout than the night watchman was upon him. He had been vigilant, he protested, since the nightfall and nowhere was there even a trace of a burglar. Laying claim to some professional experience, he placed his finger at the right spot and asserted that the tailor had created the situation in order to defraud his clients of their garments. The latter retorted that in the circumstances it was the watchman himself who had indeed burgled the house. In the midst of this altercation, accusation and counter-accusation, the neighbourhood was roused and sympathetic people entered the lists on both sides. They knew the poor tailor, they also knew the good watchman and could not decide who was right and who had committed transgression.

The case was ultimately placed before the chief minister for his decision. Apart from the two parties, all those clients of the tailor who had lost their garments also evinced interest in the case. Unfortunately, even the wise minister could not arrive at a decision to satisfy his conscience, let alone the public. Pending a deeper probe he put both the parties into prison.

After some time it so happened that a servant of the Malik died. His wife beat her breast and tore her hair. The master becalmed her with a promise of pension and had the dead body placed in a shroud and coffin at his own cost. It had to be buried in a burial-ground several miles away from the city. The chief minister got the tailor and the watchman from the prison and charged them to carry the coffin to the cemetry in the village where the deceased servant was born.

The two submitted themselves to this ordeal and trudged a couple of miles through mud and slush. The wind was chill and biting and they rued the day when they had got involved in the case that led them to their incarceration. On one occasion when they had placed the coffin down and were having a brief respite, the watchman said, "Look ye, tailor, what led you to set such a trap as to involve yourself and me so badly ?" The tailor was famished. It was such an ordeal to carry the heavy coffin. He heaved a sigh and confessed, "Friend, I had fallen on lean days and I thought I would provide a second meal to my dependents. But it was the thin end of the wedge."

Both of them were astonished and horrified to see the lid of the coffin rise slowly and the servant step out "I say," he said, "your confession of the truth has brought me back to life." The wise minister had played a trick upon them to arrive at the truth. The tailor repeated the confession before the Malik and the watchman was exonerated.

Zain-ul-abdin and Shri Buth

THE dynasty of kings founded in Kashmir by Shahmir, the emigre from Swat, ruled the valley for nearly two hundred years During this period the bulk of the population of Kashmir and the surrounding hills embraced the Islamic faith, generally either for reasons of a political or social nature, or sometimes under persecution. Cases of conversion motivated by a sincere feeling were not ruled out, especially because of the affinities between the *sufism* of Islam and Kashmir *Shaivism*. Lavanyas of the earlier generations became 'Lons', Margesas turned into 'Magres' or 'Maliks' and Damras flourished as 'Dars'. People changed their religion but followed their own calling. Proselytising from Hinduism to Islam was carried on by the hundreds of Syeds who had sought asylum here from oppression by the Turks and the Mongols in central Asia and enjoyed the patronage of the kings of Kashmir.

Sikandar, usually called *But-shikan*, or the iconoclast, ascended the throne in A. D. 1381. On account partly of his own predilections and partly under the advice of his prime minister Suhabhatta, a neo-convert, he resorted to fanatical persecution of the non-Muslims. Temples and shrines were demolished, idols broken to pieces and scriptures and manuscripts thrown into the Dal. The Hindus were asked to accept the religion of the ruling dynasty or flee the country and naturally became the victims of oppression. The *jaziya* or poll tax and other discriminatory imposts were levied on them. Consequently many of them either became converts or migrated to the plains. Quite a number of them preferred death and those who survived could be counted on the finger-tips.

It is said that only eleven families of Brahmins were left in the valley.

The Hindus naturally felt harassed, oppressed and down-trodden. Their hearts were lacerated. A little over fifty years earlier the Brahmins were so strong that they successfully resisted the attempt of Suhadeva to impose taxes in order to propitiate Zulchu or Zulqadr Khan. Now they had been reduced to a handful in their own country and suffered persecution at the hands of those neo-converts to Islam whom they had dominated and commanded. In the name of proselitisation the state encouraged the lawless elements rather than grant the law-abiding Brahmins protection against persecution. Those handful of Brahmins who stuck to their faith and their land of birth against all these odds were possessed of a commendable spirit indeed, verily like those Christians who bore the sign of the cross in their hearts.

The cycle of time and circumstances does not, however, stand still. In the course of time Sikandar, the iconoclast, and Saifdin, the former Suhabhatta, succombed to death and after a spell of civil war and uncertainty Zain-ul-abdin ascended the throne. It was like granting the gift of sight to a person born blind; it was like the restoration of the sovereign reason and balance to a mind distracted by fiendish nightmares and idiotic fancy; it was, indeed, like the return of fertility to a land abandoned to the growth of cactus

Zain-ul-abdin was not an ambitious conquerer. He set his heart upon far different ambitions He sought to overcome anarchy and disorder. Wherever there was a chance of lawlessness breaking out or revolt raising its dreadful head, he promptly suppressed it and awarded dire punishment to the offenders. Having rid the land of misrule or revolt against the central authority, Zain-ul-abdin embarked upon a programme to develop the productive wealth of the country. He had many canals dug to make vast areas cultivable. He also revived several industries and introduced others, some of which have

won name and fame for the nimble fingers of the skilled workmen of Kashmir.

This adds upto an excellent testimony for any king. Even with this record Zain-ul-abdin would have won a unique place in the edifice of the history of Kashmir. But this king's claim to immortality rests on qualities and achievements that are far more important. He had a truly catholic outlook on life and, unlike his father, looked upon the Hindu and the Muslim with the same regard. He was gifted with tolerance and held the scales even between all communities and sought the company of learned men who came to his court from distant lands. The Hindus who had suffered at the hands of Sikandar heaved a sigh of relief as the social, religious and political disabilities that had been imposed upon them were lifted.

How was it that the policy of Zain-ul-abdin was quite a contrast with the tradition of his predecessors? How is it that while Sikandar laid the foundation of the causeway running across the Dal with the manuscripts of ancient lore in Hindu houses, Zain-ul-abdin not only sought their sacred books from outside the state but made pilgrimages to Hindu shrines like Gangabal, Susramnag and Vishnupad and had sriptures like *Yogavasishth* and *Gita-Govinda* read to him by Srivara? Catholicity and tolerance were an integral part of his nature from the very beginning, but an incident in his life helped to bring about their sublimation.

Once the king had a boil on his body. It was attended to by the physicians in the routine way but it did not respond to their treatment. In a few days it developed into a running sore in spite of the poultice and ointments prescribed by the experts. The king began to suffer agony on this account, for the poison spread towards other parts in his body. As physician after physician confessed his failure in checking the growth of the poison-infected sore, the king grew progressively emaciated, and lost all peace and rest. Many people felt certain that the sore would end only with the death of the king who felt helpless and in despair.

One day news reached the king that a good but practically unknown physician was willing to try his remedies on the running sore. In spite of the obvious reluctance of the physicians in attendance upon Zain-ul-abdin, Shree Buth, the unknown apothecary, was sent for. Shree Buth observed the king's ailment minutely, took into consideration all its aspects and finally submitted his advice regarding its cure. His advice was followed and the remedies suggested by him were tried on the royal patient. As good fortune would have it, the ailment began to respond to the new measures and in a few days everybody felt convinced that the remedy had proved efficacious. Sleep and rest were restored to the Sultan, and cheerfulness and confidence returned to him. The running sore dried up gradually and the wound was healed. The secondary ailments to which the sore had led were got over too. Nobody could deny that what Shri Buth had accomplished was little short of a miracle. The king and his loyal subjects were highly pleased with him and even the court physicians who were, no doubt, jealous of their new rival felt that Shri Buth had added lustre to their profession.

When the king held his court after taking his bath betokening his return to perfect health, he expressed his appreciation of the services rendered to his person by Shri Buth and offered to pay any reward that he asked for. But the physician did not appear to be moved by the offer of this blank cheque. The Sultan tried to make his offer specific and asked if the conferment of a large estate would please the physician. He repeated the offer of a befitting reward in terms of gold, wealth and precious stones which lure all mortals, and yet the heart of Shri Buth made no more response than the running sore of the king had responded to the remedies of ordinary physicians. Everybody at the court was puzzled and most of all the king, for all his life he had met none who would not jump immediately at the mere mention of such an offer. Shree Buth sat silent, apparently unfathomable, deep as the ocean. When he felt that his silence might be misconstrued he submitted,

"Your Majesty, I am a humble man and my needs are few. Whatever little I want for myself and my family, through the grace of God and the protection granted by Your Majesty, I get all that. I have no liking for estates. gold or jewels.....".

The words of Shri Buth seemed to imply that he wanted to say something more but hesitated to express. The Sultan himself could understand the significance of the hesitation on the part of the physician and he proceeded to reassure him. "We feel that Shri Buth has something on his heart which he hesitates to express," said the Sultan. "He has granted us a fresh lease of life," he continued, "let him accept the word of the Sultan that no harm can come to him if he speaks straight and speaks true "

"Your Majesty, my life is in the hands of my liege. Assured of safety by the Sultan I humbly seek a boon. Let the Hindu subjects of your majesty be permitted to enjoy the same liberty as their Muslim brethren. At present they suffer from several disabilities : they are required to pay a poll tax ; they are not free to offer worship in their shrines and temples ; they cannot put on dress in accordance with their customs and traditions ; they are not permitted to educate their children as they used to do in the past.....".

"Enough, Shri Buth, thou hast spoken enough of the disabilities suffered by our Hindu subjects. We recognise it as a sin to deny them the same rights as are enjoyed by the Muslims. In future they would be free to worship God as they please, to dress as they please and to educate their children as they please... ..".

The king was as good as his word. He issued commands that the poll-tax on the Hindus be abolished and they be granted the same rights as the Muslims. The commands were carried out and the Hindus began to thrive under the patronage of the Sultan. Some of them rose to the highest positions. Shri Bhat himself became Zain-ul-abdin's minister for education. The king invited many scholars learned in Hindu

scriptures from India and one of them got with him a copy of the *Atharva Veda* which later came to be regarded as the only authentic copy of this scripture. Jonaraja, and on his death his pupil Srivara, became the official chronicler and on the request of the latter the king abolished the last disability on the Hindus, viz., the cremation tax on the Hindu dead. Not content with this he encouraged Hindus to live their lives in accordance with their traditions and customs. He participated in their festivals, especially the feast of lamps when they celebrated the anniversary of the birth of the Vitasta,* the river which gives life to the valley. He also went on pilgrimage to such shrines as Susramnag, Gangabal and Konsarnag where Srivara, the chronicler, accompanied him. By such deeds the benumbed spirits of his Hindu subjects were set to blossom and the Sultan came to be known as Bud Shah or the Great King.

Zain-ul-abdin is the only ruler of Kashmir whose memory has been cherished thus. He owes it not a little to Shri Buth.

The physician won for his brethren an incalculable boon and for himself undying fame. A locality near the palace of Zain-ul-abdin is still named "Shri Buth" after the physician who helped the king's growth and enlightenment.

* The Vitasta, or Jhelum, according to a legend, is a manifestation of Parvati's, the consort of Shiva. Shiva is said to have struck the earth with his trident near the abode of Nilnag when the Vitasta gushed forth on the 13th of the bright half of Bhadun (i. e. September).

Zain-ul-abdin

SOMETHING has already been mentioned of how Zain-ul-abdin's name has attained unrivalled celebrity in the history of Kashmir and why his subjects conferred upon him the unique title of 'Budshah' or the 'Great King'. There are many tales recorded by historians and learned men which stand as a tribute to his catholicity, his regard for the welfare of his subjects and his wisdom. Many failed to understand how, coming soon after his father, Sikandar the iconoclast, he could display godly catholicity and angelic tolerance, thus demonstrating secularism in word and deed which is unique in history. This striking phenomenon has led to many imaginative exercises.

According to one version Zain-ul-abdin's malady proved fatal for him and neither Shri Buth nor any other physician could save his life. A few hours before his spirit was expected to seek release from the mortal body, two of his devoted Hindu servants unable to stand the parting from the king approached a *jogi*, whom they knew as possessed of extraordinary spiritual powers. The *jogi* replied that the king's end could not be delayed but that out of consideration for their distress he could, through his extraodinary powers, animate the dead body with his own soul The two Brahmins felt pleased and promised to abide by all conditions that the *jogi* laid if he actually instilled the dead body with his own soul.

Having impressed upon the Brahmins the urgency to keep his mortal body well preserved, his soul left it and made the body of the king on the death-bed instinct with life. But the process was effected so smoothly that nobody could suspect anything. The moment the king awoke from his death-like slumber, the Brahmins cremated the body of the *jogi* so that

his soul could not return to it causing the "death" of the king's body.

His recovery from illne s brought about such an unpredictable change in the life of the Sultan that even his very close associates began to wonder. He lived for thirty two years after the incident and forgot all distinction of caste, creed and colour in his treatment of his subjects People could not explain this complete transformation except on the basis of the soul of the Hindu yogi having re-animated the body of Zain-ul-abdin after his death.

The official chroniclers of the Sultan, Jonaraj and Srivara, have so much to record about the beneficial activities of the king that they practically neglect to say how he dispensed justice and probed deep into problems. On one occasion a Brahmin submitted a petition to the king that he had lost his cow. The police could not trace it anywhere and the owner of the cow who belonged to Jayapidpura, near Sumbal, had to be content. Sometime later, he went on a pilgrimage to Maraz, or the district to the south of Srinagar. He passed through a village where he saw a cow resembling his own. The marks on the cow were exactly like those on the cow he had lost and he felt that his own cow had wandered to this village. He followed her to the home of her master and introduced himself to him. The latter would not oblige him by returning the cow and the Brahmin of Jayapidpura, filled with righteous anger, quarrelled with him. When these developments failed to settle the issue, the Brahmin approached the king.

Both the parties were present when the king heard the Brahmin's petition. But in those hoary days it was a far cry from Jayapidpura to Maraz and the king's ministers expressed doubt if the cow could have strayed so for away from her original home. On the other hand the Brahmin was equally vehement that by the marks on her person the cow could be no other than his own. The king did not find it easy to decide the case to his own satisfaction.

At last a solution flashed upon his mind. The cow was there

before them together with her calves. Jayapidpura was in the close vicinity of the Wular lake. The lake and the marshy hinterland fringing it around produced water - nuts in such abundance that even the animals were fed on the watery fodder. Water-nuts were unknown in Maraz and even men were unfamiliar with them, not to speak of animals. The king, therefore, had water nuts thrown to the cow to see if she really came from Jayapidpura in Kamraz Everybody was surprised to see that the cow ate the water-nuts with relish but the calves she had given birth to in Maraz refrained from doing so. The sagacity of the king was praised.

On another occasion the king's attention was invited to the pitiable condition of a Brahmin who submitted that he had been deprived of his land by fraud. The petitioner was known to the chronicler Srivara and he has given details of the case which was decided in his presence. There was a Brahmin Laularaja by name who having fallen on lean days sold one-tenth of the land belonging to him. The sale deed was drawn up in writing. Laularaja died the same year, but before his death he took his son Nonaraja and several others into his confidence regarding the sale of his land.

Nonaraja who came into the inheritance of the property left by his father was not very keen about the land that came into his possession. He was weak and simple, and it never occurred to him that his failure to look after his property might adversely affect his interests as those of his descendants. In the course of time, Nonaraja came to the end of his span of life and the matter was left as it stood.

Another generation passed and the vicissitudes of time drove the descendants of Laularaja to seek their livelihood from the good earth. But their title to the land which they looked upon as their own was contested and they were thrown out "This is our land," they protested but protested in vain, for the other party asserted that they had purchased the land outright and had possession of it. The case was submitted to Zain-ul-abdin for dispensing justice.

The king asked the defendant to produce the sale deed which when examined testified that ten plots of land had been sold by Nonaraja's son. The descendants of Nonaraja submitted that it was entirely without basis. Their sincerety was compelling and yet the king could not go against the document. At last it struck him that there may be forged entries in the deed. The king had the document thrown into water. The newly written letters pertaining to the sale of ten plots were effaced and the old ones* showed clearly that only one plot of land had in reality been sold. The forgerer was punished.

On another occasion the Sultan was confronted with a graver problem depicting human nature in its most repulsive aspect. It was a case of 'smite the nose to spite the face', or, to be nearer the truth, 'stab the heart to spite the face'. A plaint was submitted to the king by a woman against another woman, and what complicated the matter still further was that the two women were wedded to the same man and lived in the same house. Though the institution of polygamy has been in existence for thousands of years, there are few women even in the east who can live at peace with a cowife.

The two women, subjects of Zain-ul-abdin, were filled with bitter jealousy and not infrequently gave violent expression to the inherent hatred that each nursed against the other. It was a regular cat and dog life and the once uxorious husband of this team of wives often cursed the hour when he had been let to enter the world of matrimonial plurality. "But the arrow has been shot from the bow," he would say, "and nothing can bring it back". His wives outvied each other in accusing the husband of favouring the other. They left no stone untur-

* The sale deed was probably recorded on birch back which, according to Dr. Buhler, was used for MSS in Kashmir, till the Mughal conquest. A special ink was made for this purpose by boiling the charcoal of almond shells with *gomutra* (urina bovis). "The ink thus obtained is not affected by damp or water, and as the birch bark likewise stands water well, it is possible to improve dirty old MSS by washing them." *Report* : G. Buhler-1877.

ned in creating an uncompromising situation for each other. They were always on the lookout for seizing an opportunity to show the other down.

The senior and elder of the two wives who laboured under a feeling of injustice from the day she had to admit a rival in her home was filled with a bitter frenzy and eagerly awaited an opportunity to wreak her vengeance, absolute and unmitigated, upon the other. She waited many years and when nothing better turned up, she strangled her own infant child and foisted the crime on the other. The plan was well conceived and executed, for no one could think of a mother strangling her own infant, and everybody believed her story All who heard of the incident expressed sympathy for her and cursed the other co-wife.

When the king heard the plaint he was filled with anger that anybody, especially a womon, should be so stone-hearted as to strangle a child out of enmity for its mother. However, he commanded the men learned in the law to dispense justice in the case. The two women were summoned by the judges. There could be no doubt about the crime, for the deceased child had been seen alive a few hours earlier, and its dead body bore marks of strangulation about the throat. The crime was alleged to have been committed when the mother was away from the house for an hour or so which fact had been corroborated by reliable witnesses. When the junior of the co-wives was examined she shed tears profusely and expressed complete ignorance of everything. Her looks were disarming in their innocence and her tone and expression compelling in their sincerety. And yet who could suspect a mother of strangling her own child ? The judges made their submission to the king that they had not been able to sift the truth from falsehood.

Though the Sultan had passed the case on to the judges he had the various aspects of the matter under his active consideration all along. No convincing solution suggested itself to

him or to his ministers for quite sometime. The Sultan then applied himself to the case in right earnest. Calling the junior co-wife in private he promised to grant her pardon if she confessed her crime, but threatened her with dire punishment if she were found guilty in spite of her denial. The lady repeated that she knew nothing about the matter and that she was absolutely innocent. "If you are innocent," retorted the king, "you divest yourself of your garments and appear naked before the inmates of your own house." The woman felt the earth slipping underneath her feet. She submitted, "Sire, I would sooner be hacked into a thousand pieces than divest myself of my garments."

The king proceeded to the chamber in which the senior wife was awaiting her interrogation. She protested her innocence with greater vehemence than the other whom she charged of strangling her child out of jealousy and hatred. When the king put to her the same proposal of proving her innocence, she expressed readiness to divest herself of her garments and appear nude before the inmates of her house. "The woman who could do so," said the king, "could also strangle her own child." He held her guilty and punished her.

* In this connection the following news item from a daily newspaper of 13—7—1963 appears to be of interest : Ankara, July 11 : "An angry 20—year—old woman drew a pistol from her handbag and shot her husband dead in open court here yesterday after a jury had found him not guilty of cutting off her left hand.
The court accepted her husband's version that the woman had cut off her hand herself so as to be able to accuse her husband of the crime.
The news item bore the caption: "Angry Young Woman".

Habba Khatun

IN an earlier chapter mention has already been made of Harshdeva, a prince devoted to fine arts like music and dancing. Kalhana has lavished a good deal of sympathy over him and has been equally severe with him on account of his folly which brought about his downfall. About five hundred years after Harsha another king who was infatuated with music, dancing and the fine arts succeeded to the throne in Kashmir. Yusuf Shah Chak, as this king was named, lives in the popular imagination for two reasons. He mismanaged the state so badly that it became possible for the Mughal king Akbar to conquer and annex Kashmir to his vast empire and secondly he married a woman who has attained fame under the name of Habba Khatun.

Zoon, the name which Habba Khatun bore before fortune dawned upon her, was born in a petty village near Pampore, famous for its saffron. She was gifted with extraordinary beauty and had cultivated her voice so well that people felt spellbound at the enchantment of its melody. This was especially so when she sang the tune *Araq*. Her father was, however, a poor peasant and could not find for her a husband who could value either her looks or the bewitching sonorousness of her voice. She was married to a man who was no better off than her father and who, blind to the extraordinary dowery nature had given her, reduced her to the drudgery of the hewers of wood and drawers of water. The tender and refined nature of Zoon could not stand such a life, the marriage broke and she returned to her father's house.

Zoon had not only the voice of an angel but also the sensibility of a poet. The frustration in her emotional, domestic

and social life deeply wounded her soul and to seek relief from this pain she made the world—the world of man and nature, of bird and beast of flower and tree, of the stars, hills and waterfalls—her confidante and uttered her grief aloud. Unwittingly she had grown into a poet and whoever heard her sing spontaneously in her native tongue, found in her strains a poignancy of feeling almost unknown to them before. Her songs which sprang from the depths of her soul still strike chords of sympathy among all those who hear them. When they were sung in her own mellifluous voice, they either moved the hearers to tears or disembodied the spirit Many of her songs even now generate a mood of melancholy brooding. They take the form of an address by the love-lorn woman to the husband who has discarded and slighted her. The most popular of them all is :—

Who was the jealous rival (co-wife) of mine who has enticed you away and why has aversion for me grown in you.

One day she was singing such a song oblivious of the ups and downs in capitals, palaces and courts when Yusuf Shah Chak, the ruling prince, happened to pass that way. His ears were assailed by her mellifluous strains and he stood enthralled She had outlived the period of misery and frustration in her destiny. The king having never seen such a harmonious combination of good looks and sweet voice was at once overcome by the charm of her personality. He sent precious gifts to her father Abdullah *alias* Abdi Rather and exalted Zoon to the honour of his sweetheart and queen. Thereafter he spent all his time in the company of Habba Khatun, the name adopted by the erstwhile Zoon, in song, minstrelsy and sportive dalliance even to the detriment of his kingly duties. He was perhaps the first man to discover the enchantment of the hill resorts and meadows Gulmarg, Sonamarg, Achabal and Ahrabal.

The exaltation of the queen from her distracted life in the peasant's hut and hovel to the palace led to the fulfilment of the hidden needs of her soul and brought about a sublimation

in her nature. Lyrics and songs poured forth from her lips which have won a permanent niche for her not only in the literary history of the country but also in the national imagination. Several anecdotes have been recorded by historians which stand as a tribute to her wit, intelligence and magnanimity.

In her own life time she became a celebrity for her beauty and her attainments in music and poetry and many people, doubtless, took a fancy to her One of them, an unsophisticated youth, somehow developed a longing for her person but dared not express it for fear of dire punishment. He was artless and naive, yet there was a degree of intensity and truth in his passion which consumed him from within and he began to languish for the beloved of his fancy. It could not pass unnoticed for all his secretiveness. He had a wife devoted to him and she felt alarmed at the deterioration in his health and spirits. At last after persistent appeals she wrung the secret out of him that the canker lay in his incurable longing for the person of the queen.

The good woman was dumb-founded at the morbidity of her husband and the audacity of his passion. Apart from the pangs of jealousy that the revelation of this knowledge kindled in her, she could not breathe the secret lest it recoil upon her husband's head as well as on her own. Yet the state of health of her silly husband was growing progressively more precarious, and she felt that unless he took some steps to find a solution, the life of her husband appeared to be in danger. She was so devoted to her husband that she would face any ordeal to save his life from danger or his mind from distraction. She held out an assurance to him that she would do everything to help him.

According to a plan she sought employment in the retinue of the queen as a maid. This made it possible for her to have free access inside the palace. In the course of time she became attached to the person of the queen and lost no opportunity to impress her with her zeal and devotion, selflessness and humi-

lity. When honest labour had gained for her a degree of regard in the queen's heart, one day she made bold to lay bare her own heart to the august lady. Before doing so, however, she sought and obtained a promise that no harm would come to her or any one related to her on account of what she was going to say. Having proceeded so far the maid, with as much of tact and art as she was capable of, revealed the secret of her husband's longing for the person of the queen.

Habba Khatun was filled with frenzy beyond description. She was astonished to learn that any humble man could so play with his life as to engender a mortal fancy for the august person of the queen which even the sun and the moon were ashamed to touch. The maid with object humility reminded her of the promise of mercy to which she was already committed. After her fury had slightly been composed it struck her that it was an extraordinary request to come from a woman. Whatever the crime of her husband, she felt that the devotion with which the maid pleaded his cause deserved consideration and appreciation. The temper of the queen cooled down and she reassured her maid that because of her devotion and fidelity no harm would come to her or her husband on account of the nature of the request which would have driven any other person to the gallows.

The incident passed off without any adverse consequences to the maid. But she began to sigh and languish because what she had banked upon had failed her. Habba Khatun understood it quite well and admired her deep attachment to her husband. One day the queen asked her, "Maid, how goes it with your husband now ?" To which the other submitted, "Worse and worse, your majesty," and she began to sob. "I would do anything for his sake," she continued, "but to my ill luck this is a matter obviously beyond my means." The queen was touched by this statement and warming up towards the maid told her that she would like to talk to her husband the next day.

At the appointed hour the man made his obeisance to the queen in her audience chamber. The two were all alone. She conceded at once that a feverish imagination had truly consumed the fellow and reduced him to a shadow, and that only a bold gesture on her part could restore him. Out of regard for her maid she was prepared to go more than half way to help her moonstruck husband.

She treated him with kindness and heard from his lips an account of the infatuation which had seized his spirit and gnawed into his flesh insidiously. Not once did she frown or falter in her indulgence towards the unfortunate petitioner. She appeared to have softened towards him and willing to grant his boon. At last she said with her own tongue, "I shall admit you to my bed-chamber tonight provided you agree to the conditions that you keep the matter absolutely secret, that there is to be not a single light and that no word is to be exchanged between us then" A blind man does not seek the gift of sight with greater eagerness than the man agreed to all the conditions set by the queen.

At the appointed hour of the night the infatuated man was admitted to the palace and led to the bed-chamber of the queen. As agreed upon previously, there was no light, nor was a single word exchanged by any one nearabouts. But the nostrils of the man on his errand of love were assailed by a fragrance all extraordinarily delicious Strains of music, soft and voluptuous, came from some far off chamber and, all in all, the whole atmosphere was enchanting. He had not had much time to imbibe the aroma of the royal bed-chamber when his attention was arrested by a soft jingle of feet. The intruder felt convinced that the august person of the queen dressed in the splendour of silks and velvet, had deigned, in accordance with the promise given to him, to respond to his longing for her. He was in an ecstasy.

The silly lover, through an exercise of the queen's wit, had found peace. He had to leave the palace, as stipulated pre-

viously, while it was still dark. At dawn the maid came out of the ceremonial bed-chamber of the queen where she had spent the night in company of her husband who was completely imposed upon by her make-up and unsuspectingly took his own wife for the person of the 'moon-faced and silver voiced' queen. Habba Khatun's wit not only won the hearts of the husband and wife, but also gave her own name a glow till eternity.

Yaqub Shah is Defeated

THE dynasty of the Sultans of Kashmir founded by Shahmir which included rulers of great prowess like Shahab-ud-Din and the illustrious Zainulabdin petered out and was succeeded by the Chaks, descendants of Langar Chak who was, alongwith Rentchen and Shahmir. one of the three adventurers seeking refuge in Kashmir in the reign of Sahadeva in the 13th century. For centuries in the past the periods of stable administration have been few and far between, and the rule of the Chaks was no exception. Laxity in administration reached its nadir in the reign of Yusuf Shah Chak who is better known on account of his wife Habba Khatun. Many noblemen of Kashmir invited the Mughal king Akbar to redeem them from the misfortune of the rule of a pleasure-seeking sovereign. Akbar seized the opportunity and sent an army under Raja Bhagwandas. Yusuf Shah made a show of resistance for some time but finally capitulated and made obeisance to the Mughal emperor.

The generals of Akbar who thought that with the acquiescence of Yusuf Chak they had annexed Kashmir to the vast empire were proved wrong. Yaqub Shah Chak, Yusuf's son, and many patriotic nobles took it as an insult and kept the flag of revolt flying. Many battles were fought and the imperial troops worsened in skirmish after skirmish. Though the generals of Akbar put into use all their resources Yaqub Shah and his friends gave them no quarter. Srinagar offered allegiance to Yaqub Shah and the *khutba* was read in his name.

But the matter did not rest there for long. Although Yaqub had defeated the Mughals, he lost the peace. The policies he pursued brought about an increase in internal dissensions. Chaks belonged to the Shia faction by faith and their policies were formulated with a view to promoting a large following to their faction. Yaqub Shah wielded greater zeal and vigour in this

direction to the extent of insulting and harming other sections of the people. Unmindful of the enemy who was prowling on his borders he resorted to harassing his own Sunni and Hindu subjects. As a consequence leading citizens of Kashmir including the venerable Sheikh Baba Dawood Khaki and Sheikh Yaqub Sarfi, poet and savant, approached Akbar and inviting him to annex Kashmir, assured him of their cooperation on the condition, that (i) his officers would not interfere in the religious practices of the people nor the rates of food stuffs (ii) no male or female slaves would be taken from amongst Kashmiris, (iii) the people of Kashmir would be spared levies, and other hardships, and (iv) the nobles of Kashmir who were involved in dissensions, uprisings and rioting would not be invested with authority. A charter drawn up to this effect was accepted by Akbar to which he affixed his seal

The partisan zeal of the rulers and internal disensions climaxed into a large-scale rioting in which the wrath was directed against the Shias. Their principal mosque at Zadibal was burnt to ashes. This was followed by acts of violence, arson and desecration against the Shia community in Srinagar. While this was happening in the valley, the imperial army marched from Delhi and reached the Pir Panchal range of mountains. In spite of local dissensions and defections, Yaqub Shah rallied a considerable army and rushed detachments to prevent an invasion of the valley from Poonch. He himself marched towards Herapora to meet the invaders.

Herapora. originally Surapore, is a place of great antiquity on the Mughal route from Gujrat to Bhimber-Rajouri-Shopian and Srinagar. It was originally founded by Sura, the minister of Avantivarman in the 9th century and maintained as a military watch-station and customs post for centuries afterwards. Many engagements have been fought at Herapore from time to time and it would not be out of place to call it the 'Panipat' of the valley of Kashmir because on many occasions the fate of this valley has been decided there. Such was the case in 1587 A.D. when the Mughals finally overcame resistance to their invasion by patriotic Kashmiris. But it was destiny that actually deci-

ded the issue in favour of the Mughals.

As said earlier, Yaqub Shah Chak marched to Herapore at the head of his army alongwith many brave and devoted nobles. Fierce fighting took place and heroes from both the armies could not bring the engagement to a decisive finish. In the meantime, however, some of the subjects of Yaqub defected towards the Mughals and the Kashmiris began to feel that they were fighting against great odds. But this in no way made any difference and the issue still hung in the balance.

At this stage destiny played its part in a very unobtrusive manner which had not been envisaged in the least. That day Yaqub Shah rode a mare in the battle-field. In the course of an engagement he felt like making water and had to come down from his charger for this purpose. Probably there was no attendant nearby to whom he could entrust the mare, or the ruler of Kashmir did not feel the need of calling an attendant for the purpose. In any case, he left the mare free whilst he eased himself. This was the moment that destiny seized to deal a decisive blow to the unfortunate ruler A charger from the lines of the Moghuls caught sight of the mare that had the distinction of carrying the Kashmir ruler in the field. While their respective riders were engaged in a deadly encounter for mastery over the valley, the horse and the mare were involved in an amorous entanglement, and, totally indifferent to the needs of their riders, they rode across the field together before Yaqub Shah or any other person could prevent them. The forces of the Chak ruler of Kashmir were already disheartened owing to the many defections and other odds against them. They now saw the charger of their generalissimo running riderless and were driven to the conclution that their leader had either been killed or captured. They were plunged into gloom and despair and before anybody realised the truth they began to retreat to save their lives. The invading Moghuls completed their rout, marched towards Srinagar and planted their flag in the capital. Yaqub Shah lost the throne and fleeing to the south-east took refuge with the ruler of Kishtwar.

An Emperor grows Jealous

JEALOUSY, like constancy, is regarded as a hobgoblin of petty minds. Schiller calls it the magnifier of trifles ! Men in the common run grow jealous of one another over such paltry things as the filthy lucre, or power which is a passing shadow too. History has, however, shown that even kings and emperors have paid homage to the passion and the provocation in their case has by no means been different from what actuates humbler mortals. An earlier chapter recounts how the mighty Lalitaditya grew jealous of Pravapura or Srinagar, the city founded by Pravarasena, and in a fit of intoxication commanded that the city be reduced to ashes. Nine hundred years later another sovereign, a mightier emperor, when on a pleasure trip to Kashmir, opened his heart to allow the insidious passion of jealousy to coil in, and all because of a garden.

Kashmir is a country eminently suited to the laying out of gardens. Kings, queens, ministers and nobles vied with one another in perpetuating memories individually with the help of a garden. History speaks of hundreds of such gardens that have now been wiped out of existence by the billows of time. Fortunately, however, some of the gardens laid out by the Mughals have survived and they shine as jewels on the person of the celestial nymph that is Kashmir. One of these is the Shalamar garden.

There is a tradition that when Pravarasena laid the foundation of Srinagar at its new site near the hill of Hariparbat, he sought the blessings of a holy man named Sukarma Swami who lived near the present village of Shalamar. Pravarasena had a housebuilt and a garden laid out at the spot for the holy man. Be that as it may, it was Jahangir who had the garden

laid out at the spot in A.D. 1620 and named it *'Farah Bakhsh'* (Delightful). After his demise Shah Jahan had it extended, shaped it into terraces as at present, and bestowed it with life in the form of the canal which feeds its tanks, fountains and cascades. It thus became unrivalled in beauty, majesty and excellence, glittering with flowers, sparkling with sprays and warbling with song

The passion of the emperors for laying out gardens was, however, infectious and many a courtier and noble followed the example of the illustrious liege lord. In particular the shores of the Dal Lake in Srinagar were dotted with magnificent gardens. Among them was the Nishat laid out three miles to the south of the Shalamar in A.D. 1934 by Asaf Jah, brother of the famous Noor Jahan. Asaf Jah was one of the two pillars of the Mughal empire under Shah Jahan, the other being Mahabat Khan, the commander-in-chief of the army. Asaf Jah was the prime minister and the emperor was married to his daughter.

Asaf Jah's garden, the Nishat, resembled the emperor's garden, the Shalamar, in many respects. Though it is broader, its length matches that of the Shalamar. Like the latter the Nishat also is laid out in terraces and contains pavilions. A canal flows centrally through both and the same stream from Harwan feeds the tanks and cascades in the two gardens. Grassy walks, majestic chinars and the back drop of hills are distinctive features of both the gardens. Yet when Shah Jahan visited it in A.D. 1634 he felt that Asaf Jah's garden, the Nishat, scored easily against his own.

Such a distinction between the two gardens appears at first to be hard to reconcile. But a little reflection will help in explaining the apparent paradox. The Shalamar is linked with the lake by a canal about a mile in length over which mighty chinars stand guard. The lake does not contribute significantly to the beauty of the garden which stands somewhat aloof and one has to regard it as an entity by itself. The Nishat is more

fortunately located and the waters of the Dal almost beat against its western wall and the entrance from which the garden rolls upwards. The beauty of the garden is supplemented and complemented by that of the lake ; and both the garden and the lake appear to be two facets of the magnificent form of nature. This is especially so in the morning when the garden bristles with shadows and the rays of the sun rising just behind the hill standing guard over the garden covers the lake with sparkling ripples.

To cut the matter short, Shah Jahan was highly impressed with the magnificence of the garden and he gave expression to his feeling of enjoyment. Asaf Jah, his host, listened quietly. The emperor repeated his appreciation and yet the host merely accepted the compliment. The emperor expected Asaf Jah to make a present of the garden to him. To stimulate such a response in Asaf Jah the emperor extolled the beauty and magnificence of the garden a third time. But Asaf Jah, even if he guessed the emperor's motives remained as though uninstructed. The emperor was filled with wrath like a petty man. "My protege," he felt, "and yet impervious to my desires ! Let me see how long he can bypass me". The emperor decreed that the stream brought from Harwan had especially been created for the Shalamar garden and prohibited the use of its water for any other purpose. When in accordance with the emperor's decree the supply of water to the Nishat was stopped, it was turned into a waste land. The life stream in the garden ceased to flow and its heart stopped beating. The canal dried up and the tanks exposed their bottoms of caked silt. The shimmering fountains, the warbling cascades and the warbling cascades and the scintillating ripples disappeared in the wilderness. The turf began to wither and the flowers to fade. The song-birds became mute. When Asaf Jah looked at this festering frame of his garden from which the spirit had been chocked out under the emperor's commands, he was filled with dismay. He looked around and heaved deep sighs as none of those objects on which he had bestowed so much of care and devotion seemed to

respond to his heart. In a fit of dejection he sat under a tree and extreme weariness of spirit weighed him down to slumber.

The gardener observed how, under the impact of the emperor's command, sorrow had made its way to the heart of his master and benumbed the spirit which, blithe and bonny, till but yesterday blossomed out in the midst of the garden. His master was alseep, but it was the slumber borne of frustration, helplessness and despair. The gardener could not stand this sight out of his loyalty to his master. He decided to restore the flow of water in spite of the emperor and was prepared to pay the price for it. He turned the sluice at the head of the canal and restored the flow of water.

The life stream of the garden being thus restored, it began to throb with life once again. The tanks began to heave and the ripples to smile. The fountains whistled, the cascades warbled and the birds of the air played a roundelay; and Asaf Jah was awakened out of his slumber. The sight looked so unreal that he rubbed his eyes to ascertain if he was really awake. From the presence of the gardener closeby he understood what had happened, and he felt pleased for a moment. Then, at the thought of the emperor, a dread seized him. He upbraided the gardener and ordered him to stop the flow of water.

Not withstanding the prompt action taken by Asaf Jah, the news reached the emperor's ears. Swayed by rage he had the culprit produced before him. The gardener pleaded guilty to the charge. "Your Majesty", he submitted with folded hands, "My master was overwhelmed with sorrow as he saw the garden deprived of water. This humble slave could not stand the sight of dejection on the face of his master and he was led to restoring the water to the canal despite, may dust fill this mouth, Your Majesty's commands. This slave is guilty and deserves punishment. His reward lies in that he led his master out of sorrow and dejection, though for a brief time."

The emperor was pleased with the defence put up by the

erring gardener. A deep sense of loyalty and devotion to his master had provoked him to face the emperor's wrath and Shah Jahan was not a man to apply his decrees unimaginatively. The gardener's devotion warmed his heart and he expressed his appreciation by conferring upon him a robe of honour. But the gardener's readiness to make sacrifice has won for Kashmir a peerless piece of art in the shape of the Nishat. Bereft of water it would have withered, been foresaken and perhaps brought under the plough. Moved by the gardener's example the emperor issued a decree granting the use of water from the Harwan stream in perpetuity to the garden of Asaf Jah. Thus the Nishat was resurrected and saved from being turned into a wilderness, and during the last three centuries it has continued to throb with life, to smile and exercise its bewitching charms on all those who go there and pay their homage to the "pleasure garden."

Ali Mardan's Treasure

THE Mughals annexed Kashmir to their empire in India in 1587, A. D., thus putting an end to the sovereignty of the Chaks who like their predecessors, the Sultans descended from Shahmir, had their roots in the soil of the valley. The mighty Mughals lavished a great deal of care over the new acquisition and constituted it into a separate province. It was administered by a governor commanding the confidence of the emperor himself.

The old Mughal road from Delhi to Kashmir through Lahore, Gujrat. Bhimber, Rajori and across the Pir Panchal to Shopian and Srinagar was patronised by the emperors since almost the visit of Akbar himself. It was, however, Ali Mardan Khan who turned it into a highway. He built rest houses, inns and hospices at different stages *en route* under the command of emperor Shah Jahan. He also laid out a spacious garden near Telbal and constructed a pavillion therein.

Though Ali Mardan was directly responsible for the administration of the province of Kashmir, he did not want to expose himself to the rigours of cold in the valley. Every year he left the valley on the approach of winter which he passed in Lahore. At the advance of spring he returned to the valley which was looked after in his absence by his deputies. He is said to have spent lakhs of rupees on his sojourn to Lahore and back even as a king would do. In the valley itself he maintained a right royal household, spending lavishly. The tales of his munificence reached far and wide.

A provincial governer under the Mughals enjoyed great power and prestige. He also had the means of 'enriching himself beyond the dreams of avarice.' Even then the wealth and

luxury displayed by Ali Mardan Khan surprised all conjectural estimates. 'How can Ali Mardan afford to be so careless in expending wealth?' the fellow-nobles asked. The question was repeated by curious tongues to inquisitive ears till the secret was fathomed: "Ali Mardan is the privileged possessor of a fabulous treasure !"

So he was, indeed. He should, infact, not have migrated to India but for the treasure. Originally he was the governor of Kandahar under Shah Safvi of the Abba Sayed dynasty when he is said to have come by a hidden treasure. Every such treasure belongs to the sovereign and Ali Mardan was morally bound to surrender the treasure to Shah Safvi. He chose not to do so. It was probably because he got possession of it not by accident but after a taxing mental struggle, physical daring and masterly execution during the course of which he was exposed to grave danger. On this account he must have justified to himself the retention of the treasure. But he was sagacious enough to foresee that the king's spies would ultimately stumble upon this secret and put the sovereign wise on the matter. That meant death in all probability; dismissal was inevitable. Ali Mardan relinquished his office of prestige in Kandahar and like many others of his brethren migrated to India where he succeeded in securing the patronage of the emperor. In India he was out of the long arm of mediaeval punishment of the Abbasyed king.

How did Ali Mardan secure the treasure ? The account reads like a fairy tale One day while he was sojourning in the countryside he met a shepherd who tended his flock by the slope of the hillock in front of them. As an administrator interested in the affairs of the subjects entrusted to him Ali Mardan asked the shepherd if all was well with him. The latter replied with a sigh that though all was well with his person things were certainly wrong with his flock. He narrated to him how every morning one or two of his flock were found missing and submitted that if nothing was done to help him, his flock would disappear before long.

This provoked the governor's curiosity and he decided to pursue the matter. Inquiries revealed that a python who lived in a cave nearby prowled out every night and devoured several lambs. Ali Mardan was surprised to hear it and decided to verify it for himself His personal observation corroborated the story and allayed his earlier disbelief. There is a long-standing belief that wherever a python takes its abode a forgotten treasure is sure to be found nearby. Ali Mardan forgot the shepherd for the moment and pursued the matter in this light. Every detail pointed towards the probability of the existence of a treasure, and contributed to the jubilation of the seeker. The governor made up his mind to look into the cave for the treasure and to obtain it.

The first and the last obstacle in his way was the python whose very breath was so poisonous that it charred everything even at a considerable distance. There was, therefore, no question of Ali Mardan or any other warrior risking an armed encounter with the python. But the sagacious governor resorted to a simple stratagem, based probably on the inventive fancy of some writer of fairy tales. He had several lambs killed and their skins were carefully packed with unslaked lime so as to resemble living sheep in every respect. They were placed in the way of the python. When the latter advanced from its cave at night in search of its food, it came upon the dummies and devoured them unsuspectingly as Ali Mardan had envisaged. The python next proceeded to a rill to slake its thirst. No sooner did this water come into contact with the lime than it burst causing immense heat which resulted in the death of the python.

The next day Ali Mardan went into the cave with due caution and was pleased to observe with his own eyes on immense treasure, said to have been left by Qai Qawus. It consisted of gold, precious stones and pearls. Ali Mardan appropriated the treasure to himself, migrated to India and became Shah Jahan's governor of Kashmir. He won the hearts of people with his munificence.

A Communal Riot

THE people inhabiting the valley of the Jhelum are regarded as gentle, merciful and peaceloving. Their achievements in literature and poetry, art and architecture, industry, religion and mysticism are regarded as reaching a high watermark of perfection. Their culture embodying tolerance and peaceful co-existence is a synthesis of the ways of living dear to different communities and races. It is in Kashmir that the shrines of Mahakali and Mir Syed Ali Hamdani stand at the same spot. The Predimana Petha of Hari Parbat, of great sanctity to the Hindus, was also chosen by Sheikh Hamza Makhdum, a great Muslim saint, for his meditation, and his shrine stands on the southern slope of the hill. Kashmiris developed a remarkable sense of unity in their diverse faiths and taught the world the lesson of oneness realized by their saints through mystic intuition.

Yet the soil of Kashmir has been stained with bloodshed throughout the centuries. Apart from political feuds and uprisings, invasions and military revolts, quite a few communal riots have taken place at various times and thousands of innocent people have suffered. In the past the Paisacas, Nagas and the Aryans were intolerant of one another; the Buddhists and non-Buddhists did not always bear the friendliest relations ; Avantivarman (857-84 A.D.) concealed to his dying day that he was a worshipper of Vishnu ; and in the middle ages the Shia Sunni differences were not unoften the cause of civil commotion and riots provoked by insignificant and flimsy occurences.

Originally the Muslim ruling class in Kashmir was Sunni. In an earlier chapter it has been mentioned that three foreig-

ners sought refuge in the valley in the reign of Suhadeva, the last Hindu King, viz. Rentechen Shah, Shahmir and Langar Chak. The descendants of Langar Chak were Shias and when Ghazi Chak supplanted Nazuk Shah, the last ruling descendant of Shahmir on the throne of Kashmir, the Shia faith received a fillip. Even before that the Shia faith had acclaimed many converts with the arrival from Khorasan of Mir Shams Iraqi, in 1486 A.D., who consolidated the Shia community at Zadibal, near the capital of Zain-ul-abdin. Since then, and particularly after the accretion of strength the Shias got during the reign of the Chaks, a number of conflicts between the two sects of Muslims took place. In the course of the conflicts the mosque of the Shias together with the mausoleum of Mir Shamsuddin Iraqi were razed to the ground, the remains of the Mir were exhumed from the grave which was ploughed over and a good deal of suffering caused to innocent men, women and children. On one occasion a riot was provoked when early in summer people had gone to Maisuma, island in the Amirakadal-Residency road area of Srinagar, to delight their mouths with the taste of newly grown mulberries. On another occasion a Shia-Sunni riot was spearheaded on account of some differences over the allocation of rush-mattresses from the produce of nearby marshlands. Given below is the account of a minor incident developing into a Shia-Sunni-Hindu riot which brought the wrath of the emperor in Delhi on the administrators, led to hundreds of deaths and ended with the erstwhile ringleaders dangling on improvised gibbets.

In 1719 A.D. the emperor in Delhi conferred the title of Mahtavi Khan on one Mulla Abdul Nabi. He became the chief justice of Kashmir with the designation of Sheik ul-Islam. He was also granted an estate in Kashmir and he appointed a Pandit of Kashmir to look after it. One day the later went to the office of revenue administration to have certain minor matters pertaining to the estate set right. Probably some entries had to be corrected. The clerks in the revenue office, who were mostly Kashmiri Pandits, demanded

some tips or gratification as usual in such offices. The manager's vanity was injured by this demand from the estate of the head of the administration of justice. To be brief. his refusal resulted in non-cooperation from the clerks leading to a deadlock, altercation and exchange of foul and provocative words on both sides. The estate manager, to vindicate his *amour propre* and have the lazy quill drivers brought to book, reported the matter to the mighty Sheik-ul-Islam in language that was exaggerated, unrestrained, mischievous and provoking.

The Sheikh was enraged as the manager of his estate expected. But in awarding punishment to the clerks he far overshot the mark. Instead of taking to task the humble erring clerks the Sheikh sought retaliation against every votary of the faith to which they belonged. He therefore issued a decree against the Hindu residents of Kashmir, without discrimination, prohibiting their appearance on horseback in public, the use by them of turban as head-gear, and the admission of Hindu children in schools. They were ordered to use grass sandals instead of leather shoes and the *Jazia* tax, imposed on the non-Muslims in a Muslim theocratic state, which had been abolished by Zain-ul-abdin three hundred years earlier, was re-imposed upon them.

The Sheikh-ul-Islam asked the governor Mir Ahmad Khan, to have the decree implemented. As an administrator the latter saw no way of giving effect to the harsh terms of the decree and it must be said in fairness that many *muftis* (interpreters of Islamic law) and *maulvis* (people learned in the law) held that the decree was uncalled for. Before the governor could take any steps the matter reached the ears of the unruly elements in the city of Srinagar. Having failed in their attempt to persuade the governor to take drastic measures against the non-Muslims as desired by the Sheikh and endorsed by them the rabble were so excited emotionally that they took the law into their own hands and started a persecution of the Hindus.

A leading banker of the age was Majlis Rai. He is said to have deposited a crore of rupees with the state treasury and thus attained the exalted office of the state treasurer. He was proceeding from his palatial mansion at Nawa Bazar to his factory at Sarafkadal when the rioters waylaid him near Zainakadal. He was pulled down from his mount, his turban becoming a lasoo round his own neck, humiliated and belaboured. When they had enough of their sport, they left him to his own fate. He pulled himself up and approached the head of the administration. The latter very much regretted the outburst of lawlessness and appointed a few guards to escort him.

Majlis Rai felt that his prestige had been vindicated and he went back to his house The unruly crowd, unfortunately, again confronted him on his wayback. When the escort tried to give him protection against his assailants, the latter gave the guards short shrift and, with spirits buoyed up thus, tackled the venerated treasurer. He was subjected to extreme physical torture and so severely injured that he passed away the same day. He had hardly enough life to have destroyed all agreements executed by his debtors worth 24 lakhs of rupees before he breathed his last in pain and agony caused by his bleeding wounds.

The rioters did not stop here. They set ablaze the residential mansion and factory of Majlis Rai. They also extended this fanatical frenzy and mischief to cover other Hindus who thus became victims of rioting and arson, suffered from humiliation, assault and other offshoots of lawlessness. Mir Ahmad Khan. the governor, taken completely by surprise by the extreme turn the situation had taken was at his wit's end. Mahtavi Khan, the prime instigator of rioting, hid himself in the Khanqahi Maulla and the troops patrolled the area inculding Kalashpora, Naid Kadal and Zaina Kadal The atmosphere was so surcharged with fanaticism, panic and tension that even common people, ordinarily sober and peace-loving, joined their hands with the rioters against the administration. Childern and adults welcomed soldiers with stones. On the high roads

sober housewives showered on the heads of soldiers all that could become lethal in effect, viz., a mill-stone, mortor and pestle for husking paddy, bags heavily filled with earth or ashes, a stone or even a heavy door panel. The soldiers could not fight against a whole people up in arms in this wise and the rioters capped their achievements when they caused the death by drowning in the canal at Nayad Kadal of scores of soldiers so that even the flow of water was obstructed. Arson, death and destruction were stalking abroad and Srinagar was virtually turned into hell with flames jigging and shooting in all directions.

The tidings travelled down to Delhi and Mir Ahmad Khan was deprived of his exalted office. His sucessor Abdullah Khan proved no better and was replaced by Momin Khan. When the new head of the administration had reached Herapora, Mahtavi Khan went to the house of one Shapur Khan Bakhshi, a Shia gentleman, probably in order to create a stronger front against the administration. It appears that by this time many people had realised the extreme gravity of the situation caused by the Sheikh-ul-Islam and wanted to allay the frankenstein. Accordingly, some nobles laid a plot and Mahtavi Khan was killed in the house of his friend.

This was the signal for the gateway of hell to open afresh and this time the Shia community came in for especial attention at the hands of their erstwhile Sunni comrades and collaborators. The fanatical mob raided Zadibal, the stronghold of the Shias and resorted to rioting, killings and arson. Men, women and children fell victim to its wrath indiscriminately. Neither the grey hair of the aged, nor the innocence of the children could win them any concession. Women were subjected to barbarous and inhuman sadism. The Shias assembled their women and children within the premises of the mausoleum of Mir Shamasuddin Iraqi where they felt they could have better chances of security. But the mob set the shrine ablaze and numerous pretty women and tender children died either in flames or on account of suffocation. Says the historian

"Great God ! the Shias had never been subjected to such destruction and heart-rending plight. Within a couple of hours all their houses, property, chattels and their dependents were lost and their honour tattered to smithereens".

The mob got Mulla Ashraf-ud-din, son of Mahtavi Khan out of his hiding and exalted him to be Sheik-ul-Islam in place of his father, and the tide of rioting continued to swell. Even Momin Khan, the governor third in succession, failed in his attempt to stem it. Consequently the Mughal viceroy, Inayat Ullah Khan, was dismissed and replaced by Saif-ul-doula Abdus Samad Khan. The disturbance and civil commotion continued unabated till the Saif-ud-daulla entered the valley at the head of an army of veterans in 1721 A.D.

The new viceroy resorted to diplomacy in arresting Mulla Ashraf-ud-din and his close associates. They were decapitated forthwith. The leaders of the mob received punishment commensurate with their crime and even leading citizens were fined or penalized for their failure to exercise their moral and social prestige against the rebels. It is said that the bodies of as many as fifty rioters remained dangling on improvised gibbets days together from Nayad Kadal to Khoja Yarbal, the state prison. The Hindus were once again permitted and encouraged to wear the turban, ride ponies and appear in decent and dignified costumes in accordance with their tradition and custom. Order was thus restored after a year and a half. The demon of rioting was provoked by an insignificant and frivilous incident but was not crushed till it claimed thousands of innocent and venerable lives.

Pathans Annex Kashmir

THE Mughals conquered Kashmir in 1587 A.D Many leaders of the Kashmiri people had accorded to Akbar an invitation to rid them of misgovernment at the hands of the Chak rulers. Even then it was no walk-over for the veteran generals of the Mughal emperor to establish their suzerainty here. The Kashmiris put up a strong resistance under Yaqub Chak and the Mughals had to pay heavily till chance finally stamped the shame of defeat on the forehead of the last Chak sovereign.

Successive Mughal emperors, princes and noblemen were proud of Kashmir. But when the central authority in Delhi became feeble, the governors and viceroys of provinces on the periphery came to have second thoughts regarding their loyalty. Accordingly, when Nadir Shah led an invading force from Iran to India on the pretext that Shah Tahmasp, his ancestor, had loaned a large sum of money to Humayun which had not been repaid, many noblemen wielding authority on behalf of the Mughal emperor welcomed him. Among them was the viceroy of Lahore who presented the Durrani invader thirty lakhs of rupees and continued to hold his office on his behalf. A similar offer of allegiance was made to Nadir Shah by Fakhr-ud-Doula who had just then (i.e.1737) been relieved of his office as viceroy of Kashmir on behalf of the Mughal emperor.

Nadir Shah accepted the proferred allegiance and conferred upon Fakhr-ud-Doula the warrant of appointment as viceroy of Kashmir on his behalf. The latter enlisted the support of the people of the surrounding hills and entered Kashmir with a view to fighting the Mughal viceroy Anayat Ullah and having the *khutba* read and coins struck in the name of Nadir Shah. But the native masses flared up in revolt against the invader

from across the Indian frontier. Fakhr-ud-Doula was helpless and felt humiliated when Mohammad Shah and Nadir Shah buried the hatchet. Inspite of this, however, the unrealised ambitions of the Durrani caused considerable bloodshed, arson and rapine, particularly in the city.

The next attempt made by the Afghans to annex Kashmir to their kingdom also proved abortive. After the murder of Nadir Shah Durrani in 1747 A.D., Ahmad Shah Abdali secured suzerainity over Kabul and cis-Khyber territory. His viceroy in Peshawar made fervent overtures to the Mughal viceroy of Kashmir and to many nobles to transfer their allegiance, knowing full well that the Mughals had grown effete and emasculated. Several nobles of Kashmir were only too glad to get this opportunity of welcoming a different ruler and they wrote encouraging letters to Abdali. They assured him that they would deliver the Mughal viceroy with his handful of troops into the hands of the Afghan viceroy the moment the latter arrived.

Encouraged by these secret overtures the Afghans sent invading forces under one Asmat Ullah Khan in H. 1161 (i.e. 1747 A D.) He was assisted by Mahadus Khan who was eager to avenge the death of his father Mahtavi Khan,* a former Sheikh-ul-Islam. After several fierce engagements which led to varying results, the Afghan leader was shot dead and the invaders were routed.

Four years later, in 1751, Mir Muqeem Kanth, a local nobleman, became the head of the Mughal administration in Kashmir. He made a good start. Before long. however, he interfered with the organisation of the troops. A revolt flared up, he lost his office and began to wander. Later in the same year when Ahmad Shah Durrani came to Lahore, Mir Muqeem Kanth approached him with an invitation to conquer Kashmir. The Durrani king was waiting for just one such opportunity. When his general Abdullah Khan Aeshaq Aqasi entered Shopian

*See chapter 40.

at the head of an invading force, Mir Muqeem welcomed him. An engagement was fought for fifteen days without any conclusive result. Owing to the defection of his general to the Afghans and the dissensions of the nobles the Mughal viceroy had to surrender and Kashmir became a part of the Durrani kingdom beyond the Khyber pass. For the first time Kashmir formed a part of an empire which was ruled from a place beyond the frontiers of the Indian sub-continent. Abdullah Khan returned to Kabul after six months' vice-royalty with a crore of rupees.

The Afghan rule in Kashmir unleashed oppression and tyranny condemned by historians of the period uniformly. The Afghans were assisted by some nobles of Kashmir, especially Mir Muqeem Kanth. Soon another chance occurred for the people of Kashmir to shake off the tyranny of the Durranis and link themselves once again with the Mughals. Of the three parties concerned, viz., the Durranis, the Mughals and the Kashmiris, the Durranis were oppressively hostile to this move, the Mughals paid no heed and the Kashmiris were divided. As a result the revolt ended in smoke and the Durranis only strengthened their stranglehold. It happened thus.

In 1748 Sukh Jewan Mal succeeded to the viceroyalty of Kashmir under the Durranis. He was intelligent and capable and was ably assisted by Abul Hassan Khan Banday who became his minister. He suppressed all attempts at revolt and his minister Abul Hassan successfully combated a severe famine. People were apparently happy and prosperous, for even now they talk wistfully of '*wakti Sukh Joo*', or the good old times under Sukh Jewan Mal. Those nobles who did not enjoy power or authority felt unhappy and wanted to foment trouble to grind their own axes. Among them was Mir Muqeem Kanth.

Just then Sukh Jewan withdrew his allegiance from the Durranis and directed his people to read the *khutba* at the Friday prayers in the name of the emperor of Delhi. In order

to precipitate matters Mir Muqeem is said to have weakened the home front by sowing dissensions between Sukh Jewan and his minister Hassan which led to the incarceration of the latter and Mir Muqeem became the minister instead. Events took a series of turns in which Mir Muqeem and Abul Hassan shuttled between the prison and the ministry. The fabric of the society was weakened in these conspiracies and dissensions. A punitive expedition arrived from Kabul which received the active co-operation of the dissidents. In the battle that ensued Sukh Jewan's general Bakht Mal defected to the Durranis. Sukh Jewan was defeated, captured, blinded and trampled under elephants in Kabul. The Mughals made no show of sympathy or assistance to their ally Sukh Jewan and Kashmir relapsed into a colony of the Afghan empire of Kabul till 1819 A. D.

The Koh-i-Noor

FEW precious stones have had such a chequered and exciting history as the Kohinoor, 'the mountain of light'. It is said to have been extracted from the diamond mines of Golcanda in the mediaeval ages and is first mentioned in history when its owners, the family of Raja Bikramjit Singh, presented it to Humayun in 1526 for chivalrously protecting them during Babur's conquest of India. The jewel was lost to the Mughal ruling family, probably when Humayun fell on evil days, but was recovered by Aurangzeb when as viceroy of the Deccan he seized it from Golcanda state in 1656 A.D. and sent it as a present to his father. It continued in the possession of the Mughals till 1739 A.D. when Nadirshah sacked Delhi and took the Kohinoor from the emperor Mohammad Shah. The jewel passed from Kabul to Lahore, the capital of the Sikhs where from it was gained by the British in 1846 A.D. Kashmir is responsible for one chapter in the eventful history of the Kohinoor, viz, how it was secured by Ranjit Singh, the Sikh ruler of the Punjab.

After the murder of Nadirshah in 1747 A D. the hegemony of the trans-Khyber regions passed into the hands of Ahmad Shah Durrani, better known as Abdali. He was succeeded by his son Taimur Shah. Taimur Shah had seven sons: Abbas, Humayun, Mahmud, Zaman, Shuja-ul-Mulk, Shapur and Feroze, but Zaman Shah succeeded him to the throne. From time to time one of his brothers or another raised a revolt against Zaman Shah. The most turbulent among the claimants to the throne was Mahmud, while the king had greater trust in Shuja-ul-Mulk than in anyone else. After ten years of rule Zaman Shah was overthrown and blinded in 1807 A.D. by

Mahmud and Shuja, Zaman's brother, was forced to flee the country.

A series of political somersaults by princes royal, ministers and feudal chieftains occurred and Shuja Shah successfully overthrew the ruling king Mahmud who was blinded in the manner in which he had deprived his brother Zaman Shah of his sight. In this revolution Shuja relied chiefly on the help of Sher Mohamad Khan, Mukhtar-ud-Doula. At that time Multan, Kashmir, Peshawar, and other cis-Indus states of India owed allegiance to Kabul.

Shuja appeared to make a good start with the help of the Mukhtar-ud-Doula in administering the empire firmly When the viceroy of Kashmir, Abdullah Khan, withdrew his allegiance, the Mukhtar-ud-Doula brought him to heel and appointed his own son Atta Mohamad Khan to head the administration there. Events took another turn when the minister Mukhtar-ud-Doula incurred the wrath of Shuja and was dismissed. As a result the former supported the claim of another prince Qaisar to the throne The armies of the two contestants clashed in Peshawar. Qaisar was defeated and the Mukhtar-ud-Doula lost his life in the field.

When Atta Mohammad, the viceroy of Kashmir and governor of the fort of Attock, heard the news of the death of his father Sher Mohamad Khan, he withdrew his allegiance from Shuja Shah and repelled a punitive force. This was the first of a series of reverses for Shuja Shah. In 1810 A.D, he lost Kabul and the territory beyond the Khyber to his brothers. Having raised his head in Peshawar he was defeated by Azim Khan, brother of Fateh Khan Wazir and later viceroy of Kashmir. One more attempt on his part to regain Peshawar failed and in 1812 A.D. Shuja ul-Mulk was forced to seek the protection of Maharaja Ranjit Singh in Talanbiya in the district of Ludhiana. His lieutenants Jahandad Khan and Samandar Khan loyally kept by his side.

The misfortunes of Shuja Shah had yet to give him the

worst stroke. Atta Mohammad, the viceroy of Kashmir, thought this to be the most opportune time to fulfil his longing for revenge against the dismissal and death of his father Mukhtar-ud-Doula. He laid a trap for the exiled king. He sent Pandit Nand Ram Ticku, a Kashmiri who had attained great eminence in Kabul, and his own brother to invite Shah Shuja to Kashmir. The latter, perhaps allured by the offer of assistance by Atta Mohammad in regaining the throne at Kabul or in Kashmir, walked into the trap. Counting without the host, he came to Kashmir in 1812 A.D. and was promptly incarcerated in the fortress on the apex of Hari Parbat hill which had been erected the previous year. After this Atta Mohammad had the fort of Attock reinforced to prevent fresh punitive forces from Kabul approaching anywhere near Kashmir.

This gave a provocation to Fateh Mohammad Khan, the Wazir of Kabul, who thought it fit to humble the viceroy and led an expedition in 1813 A.D. Having reached the banks of the Attock he entered into a pact for assistance with Ranjit Singh. The latter himself cast longing eyes on Kashmir and was all too willing to send his troops to the valley on one pretext or another. In return for a present of eight lakhs of rupees annually the Maharaja sent ten thousand troops under his general, Mohakam Chand, to assist Fateh Mohammad in invading Kashmir against the rebel Atta Mohammad. When the latter was defeated he invested all authority in the hands of his erstwhile captive Shuja-ul-Mulk, formerly Shah Shuja. Shuja Shah set about organising resistance against the foe, the Wazir of Kabul, who had originally driven him out of Kabul and had now reached the outskirts of Srinagar. But Shuja was dismayed to find his charger immobilised with a nail through the hoof, pinning it down to the earth. This was obviously to prevent him from stepping out and joining hands with the Wazir. Officers and men of Atta Mohammad, however, greeted the advancing Wazir one after another and the former was isolated. He took shelter alongwith Shuja-ul-Mulk in the citadel of Shergarhi near Amirakadal and the invading army

camped near Chhatabal.

Finding no means of securing their release, Atta Mohammad and Shuja jointly decided to approach Dewan Mohakam Chand secretly. Atta Mohammad solemnly promised to hand over the fortress of Attock which was still under his control to the nominees of Ranjit Singh if he escaped unscathed from the trap of the Wazir, and Shuja-ul-Mulk promised to present to the Maharaja the unique jewel Kohinoor as the price of his release. The jewel obviously came to him from Ahmad Shah Abdali and Nadirshah who had secured it from Mohammad Shah, the Mughal emperor of Delhi.

Having accepted the terms of the fugitives, Mohakam Chand raised on his own the siege of the citadel of Shergarhi and the two took shelter with him. The next day Mohakam Chand secured the release of Atta Mohammad from the Wazir after the ex-viceroy had made presents to him of faked up jewels. On his way to Kabul alongwith a treasure of diamonds and precious metals Atta Mohammad surrendered the fortress of Attock to the feudatories of Ranjit Singh.

Dewan Mohakam Chand also left the valley in the hands of Wazir Fateh Mohammad Khan and returned to the court of Lahore alongwith the fugitive prince Shuja-ul-Mulk. The latter spent considerable time in Lahore. At first he hesitated to surrender the Kohinoor even though solemnly promised in Srinagar. According to Baron Von Schonberg, a friend of prince Sher Singh, the Sikh Maharaja had exerted considerable pressure on the Begum of the Afghan prince even before the arrival of Shuja-ul-Mulk in Lahore. Ultimately, a little pressure from his host having made Shuja realise the futility of going back upon his word, he presented the jewel and was permitted to depart. He made a renewed attempt to gain a foothold in Kashmir but it all ended in smoke. He roamed a fugitive till Lord Auckland, governor-general of India, befriended him and restored him to Kabul in 1839 A. D.

The Afghans are Ousted

IN an earlier chapter it has been indicated how some nobles of Kashmir invited the Afghans who replaced the Moghuls as rulers of the valley. Considering the subsequent crumbling of the Mughal empire it will easily be conceded that Kashmir was bound to secede from Delhi. The local nobles helped the Durranis to step in.

In the course of time the authority in Kabul grew weak. Ahmad Shah was succeeded by Taimur Shah. At the death of the latter in 1792 A D. a fierce struggle for the throne of Kabul followed between several of his sons who were seven in number. At first Zaman Shah had the upper hand. He was later overthrown and blinded by Mahmud Shah who himself had to yield place to Shuja-ul-Mulk. In this struggle for power the Durrani kingdom weakened while Ranjit Singh was growing progressively stronger in the Panjab. Historians are of the opinion that Kashmir was, under these circumstances, bound to pass out of the Durrani net and come under the suzerainity or tutelege of the Sikhs. The people of Kashmir, however, became the instruments of historical forces and drove the Afghans out of the valley which hastened their exit from the sub-continent of India.

That good government is no substitute for self-government is an old adage. The Kashmiris, eager for self-government, resisted the Mughals pretty long. The Moghul rule was very benevolent in comparison with that of the Afghans. The latter ushered in an era of tyranny and oppression. They imposed fresh taxes and every Afghan viceroy returning to his homeland at the end of his term carried treasures worth millions of rupees. A tax was imposed on fruit trees and hundreds of

orchards fell under the axe owing to the inability of the owners to pay the tax. Every suitor was required to deposit a fee equal to one fourth of the value of the property under dispute. On another occasion a new viceroy on his way to Srinagar spied a coffin being borne by a few men to the graveyard. The viceroy had the party stopped and getting the body out of the coffin shouted in the ears of the dead man: "Convey to the land where you are going that they should keep enough accommodation for the people I, the new viceroy of Kashmir, may despatch there." When one Afghan viceroy Azad Khan was replaced by another Madad Khan, the Kashmiris coined an epigram *jor-i azad ra madad raseed* meaning that the tyranny of Azad has been intensified (by Madad). Needless to say that Kashmiris suffered under oppression, were far from happy and would not let go an opportunity to revolt against the aliens. The first attempt made by Sukh Jewan Mal in 1762 A.D. was ultimately quelled. But at the turn of the century with shift in the balance of power between Kabul, Punjab and Kashmir, events appeared to be more favourable.

The developments that took place outside Kashmir have already been hinted at. In 1814 A. D. Atta Mohamad Khan, the revolting viceroy of Kashmir, escaped to Kabul with the help of Dewan Mohakam Chand, Ranjit Singh's general. While Fateh Mahammad, the prime minister of Kabul under Mahmud Shah, was able to retain Kashmir in the Durrani kingdom, he had been obliged to make the commitment to pay eight lakhs of rupees annually to Ranjit Singh. The latter had also managed to secure the Kohinoor from Shaja-ul-Mulk and the fortress of Attock from Atta Mohammad. Fateh Mohammad planted his brother Azim Khan as the viceroy of Kashmir, returned to Kabul and jealous of Ranjit's growing powers, refused to fulfil his engagement about eight lakhs of rupees. Ranjit Singh got a pretext for war. He had already won over the chieftains of Bhimber and Rajouri across the Pir Pantsal. Now. in spite of the advice of his aged general Mohakam Chand to the contrary, he sent an expedition into Kashmir in 1814 A.D.

Azim Khan, the Afghan viceroy of Kashmir, was by no means a novice. He had taken part in engagements in Peshawar and Afghanistan. He deployed his troops so well that the Sikhs, oppressed no doubt by inclement weather, had to beat a retreat and Ranjit Singh returned to Lahore, crest - fallen, from the Tosamaidan pass.

In this armed encounter the people of Kashmir played no significant part and simply obeyed the behests of the Afghan viceroy Azim Khan. Incensed with victory against Ranjit Singh whose troops had repulsed armies from Kabul on several occasions, he unleashed a new reign of terror. Several nobles, especially amongst the Hindus, were severely dealt with and one of them, Dewan Haradas whose brother Dewan Nand Ram Ticku was very influential at Kabul, was killed on suspicion of having expressed sympathy for Ranjit Singh. Among others he insulted and penalised another noble, Birbal Dar. In this he over-shot the mark. Birbal ar, getting a hint of the evil intentions of Azim Khan from his fellow courtier and cousin Mirza Pandit, fled the country and took refuge at the court of Ranjit Singh alongwith his son Raja Kak. He appealed to the Sikh ruler and his courtiers to invade the valley and to drive out the alien Afghans.

There was nothing communal about it. Owing to their oppression and tyranny the Afghans had forfeited the sympathy of the people of Kashmir irrespective of caste and community. Many Kashmiri Hindus rose to the highest office individually under the Afghans and enjoyed the fullest confidence in Kabul. They included Kailash Dar, Mahanand Pandit, Daya Ram Quli, Nand Ram Ticku, Haradas, Sukh Ram Safaya, Mirza Pandit, Sahaz Ram Dar and Birbal himself. Even then there was no love lost between the Afghans and the generality of nobles. One of them, Mirza Pandit, had offered to be a surety for his cousin Birbal. Yet it was he who warned Birbal of what might befall and advised him to remain out of reach of the viceroy's wrath. And when Azim Khan re-

primandingly asked Mirza Pandit of the whereabouts of Birbal He replied, "Should he be fed up with the world, he has gone to spend the rest of his days on the shores of the Ganga; on the other hand if he still loves pomp and power, he has gone to the court of Ranjit Singh to nurse his vengeance against you."

"What is the way out ?" asked Azim Khan.

"Decapitation of Mirza Pandit," replied the latter laconically. That was the temper of the courtiers. The people at large, insecure and at the mercy of every Afghan trooper, felt more outraged. Birbal exploited this situation to end the alien hold on his homeland and was loyally assisted by many Muslims.

Two of them Zulfiqar Malik and Kamgar Malik who were wardens of the road across the Pir Pantsal had assisted Birbal in his flight. The houses of Zulfiqar and his brother were razed to the ground. Birbal had kept his wife and daughter-in-law in the custody of Abdul Qadus of Gojwara. Though his own son-in-law betrayed this secret, no word was breathed out by Qadus. For this he lost his life ultimately under orders of Azim Khan. There were many other Muslims who gave their blessings to Birbal's adventure

Ranjit Singh had fought many engagements with the Afghans, but so soon after his last repulse from Kashmir he did not deem it expedient to attempt an invasion of the valley. Birbal and his son lived in Lahore for several years without any apparent prospect of returning to their homeland where the Afghan viceroy intensified his tyranny. He was helpless and had to bide his time enjoying the good will of the courtiers of Ranjit Singh, especially the Jammu Rajas, Gulab Singh and Dhian Singh.

Events in Kabul took a turn and Azim was obliged to return to Afghanistan Birbal's cousin Sahaz Ram Dar escorted his *harem* and his treasure exceeding a crore of rupees to Kabul, and Azim Khan installed his brother Jabar Khan as the viceroy

of Kashmir in 1819. Birbal was watching these events anxiously in Lahore and renewed his prayer to Ranjit Singh to drive away the aliens from Kashmir. The change in Kashmir was quite favourable to the Panjab ruler but he was still hesitant. Birbal then took upon himself to win over political support for the invading forces in the valley and to make good in terms of money the loss to the Sikh army in case of reverses. He kept his son Raja Kak as a hostage at the Sikh court.

Tha Sikhs advanced in 1819. The army was led by several capable generals and they avoided the blunders of the 1813 campaign. An asset of considerable value to the Sikhs was Birbal Dar who was pulling the strings politically in order to bring about the downfall of the Afghans. Jabar Khan also organised his troops to meet the challenge of the Sikhs. Most of the people of the valley, sick of the Afghan tyranny, were eager for a change and inclined to welcome the Sikhs. The Afghans and the Sikhs fought an engagement near Herapore. Although it led to the death of many warriors on both sides, the first battle proved indecisive. The next morning another battle was fought on the plateau just outside Shopian. The Afghans had already been demoralised owing to the might of the Sikhs. When he tried to rally his troops in a bid to sweep upon the enemy Jabar Khan was deeply wounded in the arm. That proved to be the last straw on the camel's back and he left the battlefield*. Collecting his valuables from Srinagar he rode away to Baramulla and thence to Kabul. The rule of the Afghans thus came to an end in Kashmir and was replaced by the rule of the Sikhs.

* "The discomfited Pathans commenced plundering the tents of their own generals" G. T. Vigne.

Appendix I

The Nagas

The question 'Who were the *nagas* and the *paisacas* ?' has been intriguing antiquarians and other scholars. Some of them, like Dr C. F. Oldham, believe that the *nagas* were human beings. He subscribes to the view that they were of the *surajvansi* clan and entered Kashmir from Taxila Cunningham thinks that the term *naga* was applied to those who were given to serpent-worship. He identifies this race with *kritya* who were hostile to the Buddhists because they had frequently deprived them of power and abolished their rights. Dr. Fergusson regards the *nagas* as an aboriginal race of serpent-worshippers of Tauranian stock inhabiting the north of India, who were conquered by the Aryans. Some authorities like to identify the *nagas* with the inhabitants of Hunza-Nagar in Gilgit and the *paisacas* with the Aryan settlers of the Cis-Hindukush region speaking Dardic language. Among them Dr. Grierson holds that the *nagas* were people of the Austric race who, settled in India before the arrival of the first wave of the Aryans, were driven into Kashmir from the north western India by the immigrants. He considers them to be the 'ancestors of the tribe now found in Hunza Nagar.'

"The Nagas", says the *Hindu Classical Dictionary*, "are historical and Naga-dwipa was one of the seven divisions of Bharatavarsha. Kings of this race reigned at Mathura, Padmavati, etc. They were a race distinct from the Hindus. The favourite theory is that they were a Scythic race, and probably obtained their name from worshipping serpents or holding them in awe and reverence."

The *Kashmir Series of Texts and Studies* comments :

"The *nagas* were most certainly not serpents but were a people and played a dominant role in Kashmir for several centuries. According to a legend the *nagas* were the first to accept the teachings of the Buddha. In Kashmir one of the greatest followers of the Buddha was Nagarjuna He was most likely a *naga* by race. Another Buddhist savant was Nagabodhi. Both of them have been referred to as *Siddhas*. The *nagas* are believed to have been a highly intelligent people who flourished in Gandhara and Kashmir including Gilgit and were concentrated in Taxila. It is hazarded that both Panini and Patanjali belonged to the *naga* race"

A different class of antiquarians regard the *nagas* merely as serpents. Occasionally the *nagas* have assumed human form. In the words of Dr. Vogel, "In the legends they usually exhibit a bewildering blending of human and serpentine properties ; they may act entirely as human creatures, yet their real nature and form are those of the serpent. The *nagas* are worthy of being propitiated, as their activity is, on the whole, beneficial to the welfare of man, especially in connection with their power over the element of water." (*The Indian Serpent Lore*).

According to a legend the *nagas* or serpents took refuge in Kashmir against the ruthlessness of Garuda and found their abodes in springs of crisp water. Names of most springs and tarns, especially in the southern part of the valley, carry the suffix-*nag* and the association with the serpent is inalienable. Where the name does not bear the suffix, the serpent is still there. For example, a village near Ganderbal derives its name Vurapash from Virupaksha, the ruler of the *nagas*, and Elapatra, the lake close to the lofty 13500′ pass above Khilanmarg is the Prakrit form of Airavata, the king of the *nagas*.

The serpent cult seems to have dominated the valley in some form. It is still alive in several hilly localities of the state and in the adjoining areas of the Himachal Pradesh. In Bhadrawah the most important local festival, Kailash Yatra, centres round the legend of the *naga* deities but it has nothing to do with *nagapanchmi* as celebrated in some parts of India. In the Basaknag (Vasuki) temples of Bhadarwah the head of the deity in the human form is surmounted with a hood of seven serpent heads Many such idols hewn out of wood are found in remote villages and forests in that part of the country.

It would not be without interest to recall some of the references made to the *nagas* by Kalhana himself :

'That country (Kashmir) is attended by the *nagas* Sankha, Padma and others resplendent with various jewels'. [Padma nag is the Wular Lake. Sankhanag may be a reference to what is known as Sukhnag]

I—30

'To protect the *nagas* who came to seek shelter afraid of Garuda, it has stretched out its arms high above in the guise of mountain walls'.

I—31

'He (Jaluka) entered the lakes of the *nagas* by arresting the waters and gave charm to his youth by intercourse with the *naga*-maidens'.

I—111

'When the traditional customs were broken in the land, the *nagas*, who had lost their accustomed oblations, sent down excessive snow and thus destroyed the people.' I—179

'When the rites originating from *Nila* had been re-established, the Bhikshus and snow calamities ceased altogether'.

I—186

'King Gonanda III re-introduced the pilgrimages, sacrifices and other worship in honour of the *nagas*.' I—185

'As long as the fresh crop is not touched by those who watch the fields with their spells, the *nagas* too may not touch it.'

I—234

'The Brahmin fled for protection to the *naga's* habitation.

'Thereupon the lord of the *nagas* rose blind with fury from his pool'. I—258

'He burned the king in a rain of fearful thunderbolts' I-259

Two or three women of divine appearance (*naga* women) submitted to the king :

'When our husbands, the *nagas*, were once covering the sky in the form of clouds, the peasants, who were afraid of a hail shower on the rich crop of rice, made them, O Lord, cunningly the object of your anger.' III 21-23

'The king said, "Let all the *nagas* be freed from their fetters. Upon this the *nagas* shook off their fetters and departed with their families." ' III 25-26

'The king did not know that he was really born to the throne, being the son of the *naga* Karkota who had cohabited with his mother when she took her purificatory bath.' III 490

Reference is further invited to chapters IV, X and XIX of this book.

The Earliest Human Settlement

Many authorities are of the view that the account of the settlement of human beings in Kashmir given in the *Nilamata-purana* and similar other texts agrees substantially with the historical data available, allowance being made for the mythical accretions which usually surround such statements The story of how men came to settle in Kashmir will have to be re-written in a form completely different from the accepted ones owing to the activities of archaeologists on the little mound of Burzahama not far from the Shalamar garden in the suburbs of Srinagar. Archaeologists have discovered here various settlements of the neolithic age some of which belong to a period before fire was known to the inhabitants of Kashmir. The excavations include cave dwellings of varying dimensions, skeletons of

human beings and animals, stone, bone and horn instruments from the axe to the needle, pieces of pottery and huge stones. Fire places belonging to a later age have also been unearthed. It is, however, for the experts to interpret these discoveries in terms of the life lived in Kashmir during pre-historic times.

Chandralekha

Relevant to the showering of boulders it would interest the reader to note the following :

(1) Consequent upon incessant rains a terrible flood innundated the valley of Kashmir and the adjoining hills in July - August, 1928. Bhadarwah town, fifty miles to the east of Batote also experienced incessant rains Middle aged people remember a day when at about 11-30 a. m. they heard a terrible explosive noise, a tremor in the earth and a spate of waters. The phenomena was so unexpected and dreadful that they fled to the hills on the east. Therefrom they saw, to their utmost horror, a huge mountain moving down. By about 12-15 p. m. when the darkness cleared, it was all over. Massive buildings had disappeared. What were roads had been turned into deep defiles or ravines and the whole land was littered with innumerable boulders reminescent of the stone age. Many people lost their lives. Even today we find large boulders where we least expect them, in the midst of smiling paddy fields, in the streets and narrow lanes and even in household yards. These are the legacy of 1928.

(2) On the 20th July, 1963, a cloud-burst occurred near the Tulian lake (11000') above Pahalgam in Kashmir. A part of the hill slided down along with forest trees and buildings in the town itself. After the visitation in the form of the deluge was over, part of the town was literally a waste of gorges, huge boulders, uprooted trees, sand and mud. Buildings along with their occupants were found missing either wholly or in part. On final count the number of the dead was estimated to be thirty.

A King Enjoys Killing Elephants

It would interest the reader to go through the following account given by F. Bernier who accompanied Aurangzeb to Kashmir in 1665 :

"The king (Aurangzebe) was ascending the Pirepenjala mountains, the highest of all the mountains, and from which a distant view of the kingdom of Kachemire is first obtained. He was followed by a long line of elephants upon which sat the ladies. The foremost, appalled, as is supposed, by the great length and activity of the path before him, stepped back upon the elephant that was moving on his track, who again pushed against the third elephant, the third against the fourth, and so on until fifteen of them, incapable of turning round or extricating themselves in a road so steep and narrow fell down the precipice. Happily for the women, the place where they fell was of no great height ; only three or four were killed ; but there was no means of saving any of the elephants. Whenever these animals fall down under the tremendous burden usually placed upon their backs, they never rise again even on a good road. Two days afterward we passed that way, and I observed that some of the poor elephants still moved their trunks. The remainder of the day and the following night were employed in rescuing the women and in saving other matters, and the troops were under the necessity of halting during the whole of that time. Nearly every man continued pent upon in the same spot, for it was impossible, in many places, to advance or recede, and the.....porters with the tents and provisions were not within reach "

Bernier's *Travels.* Oxford University Press 1914

A King Fight Famine

Kalhana describes a famine in his own lifetime (in the reign of Sussala A. D. 1121-28) in the following words ;

"There came a hard and terrible famine over the whole land. The nobles..... perished also quickly in that famine. The people crossed at that time the bridges over the streams holding their noses, on account of the stench lying in the water. The ground was white everywhere owing to its being covered with the fragments of skulls from fleshless human skeletons The famishing people, who could scarcely walk, and whose tall bodies were emaciated and darkened by the sun-heat, appeared like scorched (wooden) posts....."

When Akbar visited Kashmir in A. D. 1587, he was accompanied by two priests, Fathers Hierosme Xavier and Benoist de Cois. Their account of a famine is recorded by another priest Pierre du Jarrie thus :

"Whilst they were in the kingdom of Cascimir there was so, grievous a famine that many mothers were rendered destitute and having no means of nourishing their children, exposed them for sale in the public places of the city. Moved to compassion by this pitiable sight the Father bought many of these little ones, who soon after receiving baptism yielded up their spirits to their Creator..."

Moved by the distress of the famine-stricken people Akbar had extensive relief works started which included the fortifications of Nagarnagar round the area of Hariparbat and the orchards.

A Victim of Black Art

Sorcery and magic have been referred to frequently by Kalhana and the chroniclers who followed in his footsteps. In the light of modern scientific knowledge how far is it possible to place any credence on the truth of such events? Without raising a controversy it may be said that even today the number of those who seek the assistance of an adept in 'black-magic' is by no means small in Kashmir. The traditional belief in the art, therefore, continues from the earliest times among the Hindus

and the Muslims alike. The practice of this art is believed to have been encouraged by the *tantric* lore and flourished in earlier times. Maharaja Ranvir Singh (A. D. 1857-85) is said to have prohibited the practice on pain of dire punishment. It is said that many people, both men and women, in the hilly areas of the state can still practice the art to a deadly effect reminiscent of *Sister Helen.*

In this connection it would not be without interest to read the following account of the sorcerers of Kashmir given by Marco Polo (1256-1323 A.D.), the Venetian traveller who spent many years at the court of the Chinese emperor Kublai Khan (1216-1294 A D.) where he found the conjurers from Kashmir employed by the court:

"Its (Kashmir's) inhabitants also have their peculiar language. They are adepts beyond all others in the art of magic ; in so much that they can compel their idols, although by nature dumb and deaf, to speak. They can likewise obscure the day and perform many other miracles. (Reference is invited to verses 21-23 of Book III of the *Rajatarangini* where in *naga* women submitted to Meghavahana, 'When our husbands, the nagas, *were once covering the sky in the form of clouds*, the peasants.... ....'

"You must know that, when the Great Khan was staying in his palace and the weather was rainy or cloudy he had wise astrologers and enchanters who by their skill and their enchantments would dispel all the clouds and the bad weather from above the palace so that, while bad weather continued all around, the weather above the palace was fine. The wise men who do this are called Tibetans and Kashmiris. These enchanters or *Bakshi* contrive by their enchantment and their art that the full cups (of wine and milk) rise up of their own accord from the floor and come to the Great Khan (whose seat, ten paces distant, is raised eight cubits higher) without any one touching them, and this they do in the sight of 10,000 men. What I have told you is the plain truth without a word of falsehood." Marco Polo's *Travels* (translated by Latham. Penguin.)

The Kohinoor

Cunningham states that when Shah Shuja was in the custody of Atta Mohammad in Srinagar, Ranjit Singh professed to his Begum his eagerness to secure his release in the hope of gaining the Kohinoor out of gratitude. The Sikh ruler had originally been informed about the possession of the jewel by one Mir Abdul Hassan, an employee of Shah Shuja who also put obstacles in the way of the flight of his master's family from Lahore. How the Kohinoor changed owners is described by Cunningham thus :

"Ranjit Singh visited the Shah in person, mutual friendship was declared, an exchange of turbans took place, the diamond was surrendered and the king (Shah Shuja) received an assignment of a Jagir in the Panjab for his maintenance and a promise of aid in recovering Kabul."

Baron Von Schonberg gives the following account, stated to be based on the report of a reliable eye-witness, of the actual transfer of the Kohinoor from Shah Shuja-ul-Mulk to Maharaja Ranjit Singh :

"The day appointed for the transfer of the Koh-i-Noor was the 1st of June, 1813. The Maharaja came to the place of meeting accompanied by some trusty friends. Nor did he forget to bring connoisseurs to whose inspection the jewel should be subjected. When the Sikhs entered the hall where the Shah and his friends were assembled, mutual greetings were exchanged, after which a death-like stillness prevailed. An hour passed in this manner, when Ranjeet, who was impatient, made a sign to one of his friends, intimating a desire that he should remind the Shah of the object of his visit The Shah made a signal to a slave, who retired, and returned in a few minutes with a little packet which he laid on the carpet at an equal distance from the Maharaja and the Shah. Having done this he returned to his place, and all were again silent. There is no saying how long the company might have remained mute if Runjeet had not made a sign to one of his adherents, who rising

lifted the packet, unfolded the wrappings, and revealed the Kohi-Noor. The precious gem was recognised by those who had come for that purpose, and the Maharaja was satisfied. Delighted at the sight of this splended prize, he turned to the Shah and inquired what the stone was worth. The answer was 'Djuty' (shoes)".

This account differs from that of Cunningham but is corroborated by another distinguished traveller who had contacts at the Sikh court, viz., Baron Carl Von Hugel.

Appendix II

Rulers of Kashmir

[This list of the rulers of Kashmir is given here to facilitate reference wherever desired. The figures within brackets indicate the year of accession to the throne or assumption of sovereignty over Kashmir.]

I

1. Gonanda I
2. Damodara I
3. Yasovati (Queen)
4. Gonanda II
5. Lava
6. Kusa
7. Khagendra
8. Surendra
9. Godhara
10. Suvarna
11. Janaka
12. Sachinara
13. Asoka
14. Jaluka
15. Damodara II
16. Huska
17. Juska
18. Kaniska
19. Gonanda III
20. Vibhisana I
21. Indrajit
22. Ravana
23. Vabhisana II
24. Nara
25. Siddha
26. Utpalaksa
27. Hiranyaksa
28. Hiranyakula
29. Vasakula
30. Mihirkula
31. Baka
32. Ksitinanda
33. Vasunanda
34. Nara II
35. Aksa
36. Gopaditya
37. Gokarna
38. Narendraditya
39. Yudhisthira I

[No. 39 was compelled by his subjects to abdicate. Others say he was confined to the fortress at Durgagalika, near the

present Drugjan. He was succeeded by Pratapaditya, a relative of Vikramaditya].

II

1. Pratapaditya
2. Jaluka
3. Tunjina
4. Vijaya
5. Jayendra
6. Samdhiman *alias* Aryaraja

[No 6 abdicated. Succeeded by Meghavahana, a descendant of Yudhisthira I and brought up in Gandhara].

III

1. Meghavahana
2. Sresthasena
3. Hiranya and Tormana brothers
4. Matrgupta
5. Pravarasena
6. Yudhisthira II
7. Lahkhana Narendraditya
8. Ramaditya
9. Vikramaditya
10. Baladitya

[Succeeded by his son-in-law Durlabhavardhana, a descendant of Karkota Naga].

IV

1. Durlabhavardhana
2. Durlabaka Pratapaditya I
3. Candrapida
4. Lalitaditya (695)
5. Kuvalyapida (732)
6. Vajraditya
7. Prithvipida
8. Sangrampida I
9. Jayapida (751)
10. Lalitapida (785)
11. Sangrampida II
12. Cippata Jayapida
13. Ajitpida
14. Anangpida
15. Utpalpida

[No. 15 was deposed by the minister Sura and Avantivarman son of Sukhavarman annointed king].

V

1. Avantivarman (857)
2. Samkarvarman (884)
3. Gopalvarman (902)
4. Samkata
5. Suganda [Queen of No 2.] (905)
6. Nirjitvarma *alias* Pangu

7. Partha (907)
8. Pangu (again 923)
9. Chakravarma (924)
10. Suravarma (935)
11. Partha (again 936)
12. Chakravarma (again 936)
13. Unmattavanti (938)

[Kamalavardhana, the army chief brings about a *coup d'etat* and Yasaskara is elected king by the Brahmin *Parisad*].

VI

1. Yasaskara (940)
2. Sangramdeva (949)
3. Pravagupta (950)
4. Kshemagupta (951)
5. Abhimanyu (960)
6. Nandigupta (973)
7. Tribhuvana (975)
8. Bhimagupta (976)
9. Didda (981)

[No. 9. places on the throne a boy from her father's line named Sangramraja].

VII

1. Sangramraja (1004)
2. Hariraja (1029)
3. Ananta (1029)
4. Kalasa (1064)
5. Utkarsa & Harsha (1099)

[Harsha is overthrown in a revolt and killed while in hiding. Uchchala succeeds to the throne)

VIII

1. Uchchala (1102)
2. Radda (1113)
3. Salhana (1113)
4. Sussala (1113)
5. Bhikshachara (son of Harsha)
6. Vijayasimha (1129)

[Recorded by chroniclers during the reign of Zain-ul-Abdin, A. D. 1423-74]

1. Pramanu (1159)
2. Vratideo (1168)
3. Vopyadeo (1175)
4. Rasadeo (1184)
5. Jagadeo (1202)
6. Rajyadeo
7. Sangramdeo (1240)
8. Ramdeo (1266)
9. Lachhmandeo (1277)
10. Simhadeo (1291)
11. Sahadeo (1305)
12. Renchan (1324)
13. Udyandeo (1327)

Shams-ud-Din ascended the throne as the first Sultan

1.	Shams-ud-Din	(1340)	2.	Jamshed	(1346)
3.	Ala-ud-Din	(1347)	4.	Shahab-ud-Din	(1359)
5.	Qutub-ud-Din	(1388)	6.	Sikandar	(1394)
7.	Ali Shah	(1416)	8.	Zain-ul-Abdin	(1423)
9.	Haider	(1474)	10.	Hassan Shah	(1475)
11.	Mohd. Shah	(1487)	12.	Fateh Shah	(1489)
13.	Mohd. Shah (2nd turn)	(1492)	14.	Fateh Shah (2nd turn)	(1501)
15.	Mohd. Shah (3rd turn)	(1514)	16.	Fateh Shah (3rd turn)	(1515)
17.	Mohd. Shah (4th turn)	(1518)	18.	Ibrahim	(1528)
19.	Mohd. Shah (5th turn)	(1530)	20.	Shams-ud-Din (II)	(1538)
21.	Ismail	(1539)	22.	Ibrahim	(1540)
23.	Nazuk Shah	(1541)	24.	Ismail	(1552)
25.	Habib Shah	(1555)			

Chak Dynasty

1.	Ghazi Shah	(1556)	2.	Hussain Shah	(1565)
3.	Ali Shah	(1572)	4.	Yusuf Shah	(1581)
5.	Yaqub Shah	(1585)			

Akbar annexes Kashmir in 1587

1	Akbar	(1587)	2.	Jahangir	(1606)
3.	Shah Jahan	(1627)	4.	Aurangzeb	(1658)
5.	Bahadur Shah	(1707)	6.	Jahandar	(1712)
7.	Farrukh Siyar	(1713)	8.	Mohammad Shah	(1719)

Durranis supplant the Moghuls

1.	Ahmad Shah	(1751)	2.	Taimur	(1772)
3.	Zaman Shah	(1792)	4.	Mahmud & Shuja	(1802)

The Sikhs

1.	Ranjit Singh	1819	2.	Kharak Singh	1839

Kashmir was ceded to Gulab Singh by the Treaty of Amritsar in 1846 A. D.

Glossary

Agastya : a great sage who ruined king Nahusha with a curse.

Amarnath : the 'lord of the immortals,' the idol formed of ice in the cave of that name in the Pahalgam valley which attracts thousands of pilgrims on the full moon day in August. The idol waxes and vanes with the moon.

Arjuna : the third of the five Pandavas. Refer also to 'Naga-maiden'.

Asvayuj : the month marks the beginning of the cold season in Kashmir. It corresponds to late September or early October.

Avatar : incarnation, especially of the god Vishnu.

Baisakh : the month heralds the onset of summer. The first of Baisakh falls usually on the 13th of April.

Bania : a shopkeeper, usually by caste.

Begar : forced labour.

Bhadun : the month marks the decline of summer and corresponds to early September.

Bhairava 'the destroyer of fear', one of the names of Shiva. Pravarasena consecrated eight shrines to Shiva in this form to ensure protection of the city founded by him. Worship is offered at six of these even now.

Bhil : primitive Indian woodsman.

Brahma : the first of the Hindu triad of gods

Brahmahatya : a female spectre pursuing the murderer of a Brahmin.

Brahma Shukal : a 15000′ high mountain peak towering over the Konsarnag lake (13000′).

Bumozuva cave : a well-known cave a short distance from Mattan in the Lidar Valley.

Chaitra : the twelfth month in the Indian calendar corresponding to March-April.

Chandala : a member of the lowest Hindu caste.

Chandika : the goddess Durga in the form assumed for the destruction of the demon Mahisha.

Damaras : feudal barons who often became turbulent.

Dhanda : about twenty four minutes.

Dharma : justice, righteousness. Yudhishtara passed the test when he declined to enter heaven without his companion, a dog.

Durga : the great goddess in her terrible form.

Ekangas : a body of military organization.

Gandhara : a principality 'on the west bank of the Indus about Attock.'

Gandharas : or *gandharvas*, are spirit-singers and musicians who attend the banquets of the gods

Garuda : the king of birds, was a great enemy of serpents.

Guru : preceptor.

Haramukh : the mountain with dome-like peaks standing above the Gangabal lake to the north-east of Srinagar. The face of the moun-

tain looks alike from several directions.

Harem : the apartment in a palace meant for women of the family.

Harishchandra : a great king of the solar race, is celebrated for his piety and justice.

Hastivanj : the 'going' or slipping of elephants.

Kacchaguccha : a kind of grass called *kachhidari* in Kashmiri.

Kaliyuga : the iron age, or the fourth age of the world.

Karkotnaga : "Of the real origin of the designation *Karkota* given to the family we can form no certain opinion"—Stein.

Kashyapa : a great sage born in the line of Brahma not long after the dawn of creation

Khutba : address to a Muslim congregration after prayers in which allegiance to the sovereign was declared.

Kimnara : celestial choristers and musicians.

Konsarnag : large freshwater mountain lake fifty miles to the southeast of Srinagar. Also refer to 'Vishnupad'.

Kshemendra : Kashmiri polymath of the 11th century A. D

Madavarajya : the part of the valley of Kashmir to the south of Srinagar. It is known locally as *maraz* as against *kamraz* which stands for the half north of Srinagar.

Maisum : part of the island from Amirakadal to the hill of Shankaracharya in Srinagar.

Mandhatr : a king to whom is attributed a hymn in the Rig-veda.

Manu : a ruler of the earth and law-giver.

Martand : a temple, dedicated to the sun god, built by Lalitaditya.

Naga maiden : at the city of Manipura Arjuna was killed but was restored to life by his Naga wife with the help of a charm

Nakusha : a great king 'utterly ruined through want of virtuous humility'.

Nandikshetra : the 'field' of Nandi, the bull sacred to Shiva. The meadows in the vicinity of the Gangabal lake bore the name owing to a number of places consecrated to the gods or sages.

Narannag : a spring in the Wangat valley in the Nandikshetra region. Ruins of ancient stone temples consecrated to Shiva exist there.

Naubandhana : the highest (15,523') of the three peaks towering over the Konsarnag lake. Vishnu in his fish *avatara* bound to this peak the ship (*nau*) into which his consort had converted herself to save the seeds of the beings from the deluge.

Ocean of sand : believed to be the Gobi desert.

Rama : son of Dasaratha and king of Ayodhya regarded as the seventh incarnation of Vishnu.

Ramayana : 'the adventures of Rama ;' the oldest of the Sanskrit epic poems written by Valmiki.

Ratnakara : a contemporary of Avantivarman (855-73), wrote a chronicle of the kings of Kashmir from the earliest times to his own day. Kalhana acknowledges his indebtedness to him.

Sanda : a herb (*cichorium intybus*) which grows wild and is known as *hand* in Kashmiri.

It is used as a vegetable and valued as a herb.

Sati : the spouse of Shiva.

Satisar : the lake of Sati, Kashmir.

Sattu : cereals roasted and powdered, make a sort of porridge when mixed with tea or milk.

Satyavan and Savitri : When Satyavan met with his death, his wife Savitri implored Yama, the god of death, to spare his life. Touched by her devotion Yama acceeded to the importunity. Savitri is idolised as an embodiment of chastity and devotion to husband.

Shaivite : one who worships divinity in the form of Shiva and his consort Parvati.

Shiva : the third in the Hindu triad of deities symbolising destruction and regeneration.

Shivaratri : the 'night of Shiva's wedding' with Parvati falls on the thirteenth of the dark half of Phalgun (February—March). It is the most important festival among the Hindus of Kashmir.

Shraddhas : religious ceremony performed by a Hindu in honour of his manes on the respective anniversary of death. Six-monthly *shraddhas* are performed during the dark half of Assuj (September) and rice powder, honey, sesame etc. are much in demand.

Shudraka : a well-known Sanskrit playwright.

Srideva : Jayapida's brother-in-law was made regent during the kings temporary absence and offered resistance to him on his return. He lost his life during the conflict, having been mortally hit by Srideva.

Tantrins : a military caste whose support was sought by contending princes.

Tribhavana swami : 'lord of the three worlds', Vishnu.

Trisanku : a king who practised penance but was not allowed to enter heaven.

Vajravraksa : a herb believed to induce symptoms of fever. Once when Jayapida was made captive he used it to invoke pity and effect his expulsion from prison.

Varuna : the god of the seas and rivers.

Vasistha : a celebrated Vedic sage who pronounced curses on many including Viswamitra.

Vihara : Buddhist monastery.

Vijyesvara : at present known as Bijbehara.

Vikramaditya : a great king who reigned at Ujjain.

Vishnu : the second god of the Hindu triad. Also as the Supreme Being from Whom all things emanate.

Vishnupada : the lake now known as the Konsarnag (13,000′) was originally known as Vishnupad as it resembles the outline of a gigantic human foot.

Viswamitra : a well-known sage who imparted instruction to Rama the hero of the *Ramayana*.

Yaksa : a class of supernatural beings attendant upon Kuvera, the god of wealth.

TALES FROM THE RAJATARANGINI